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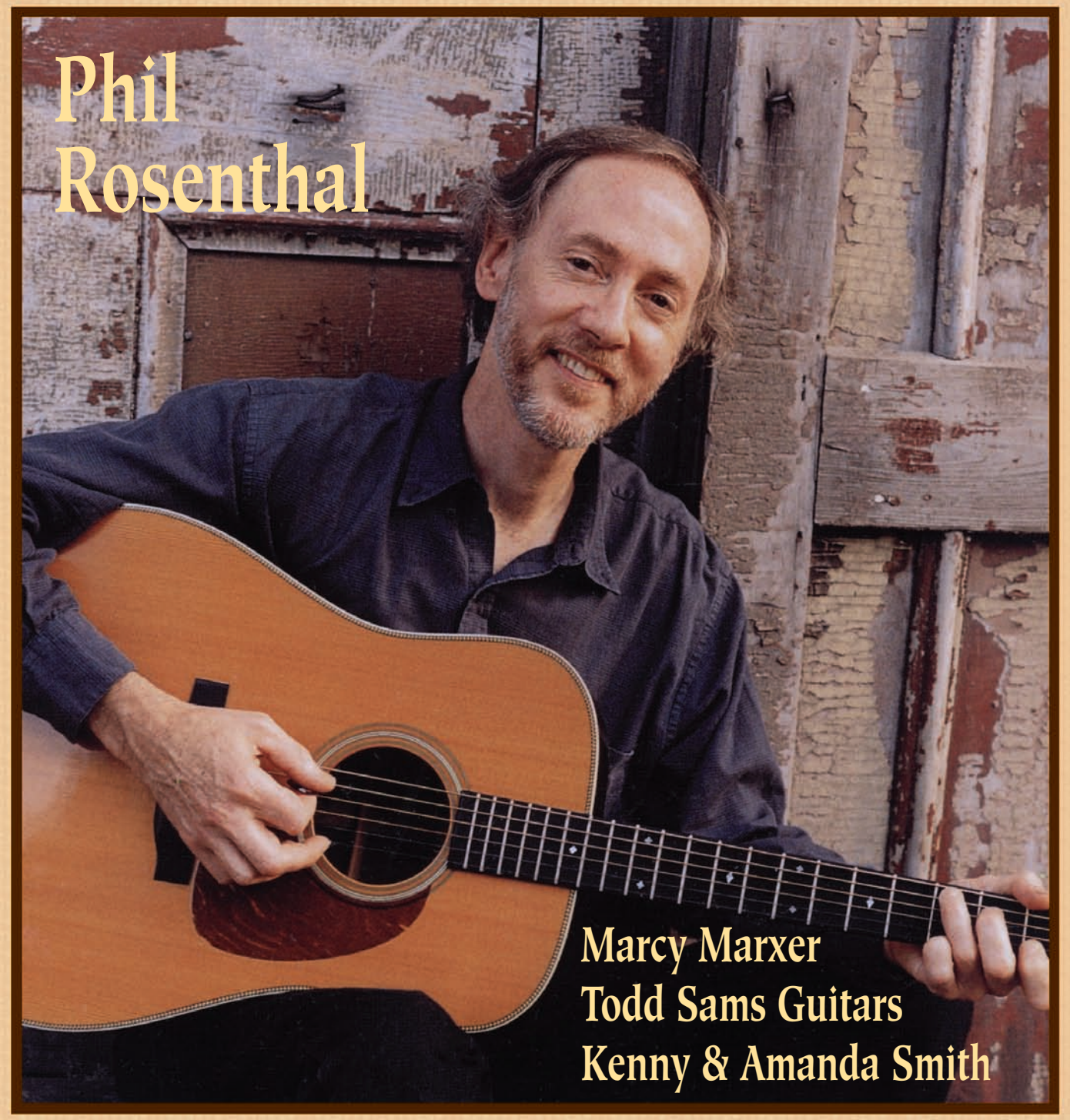
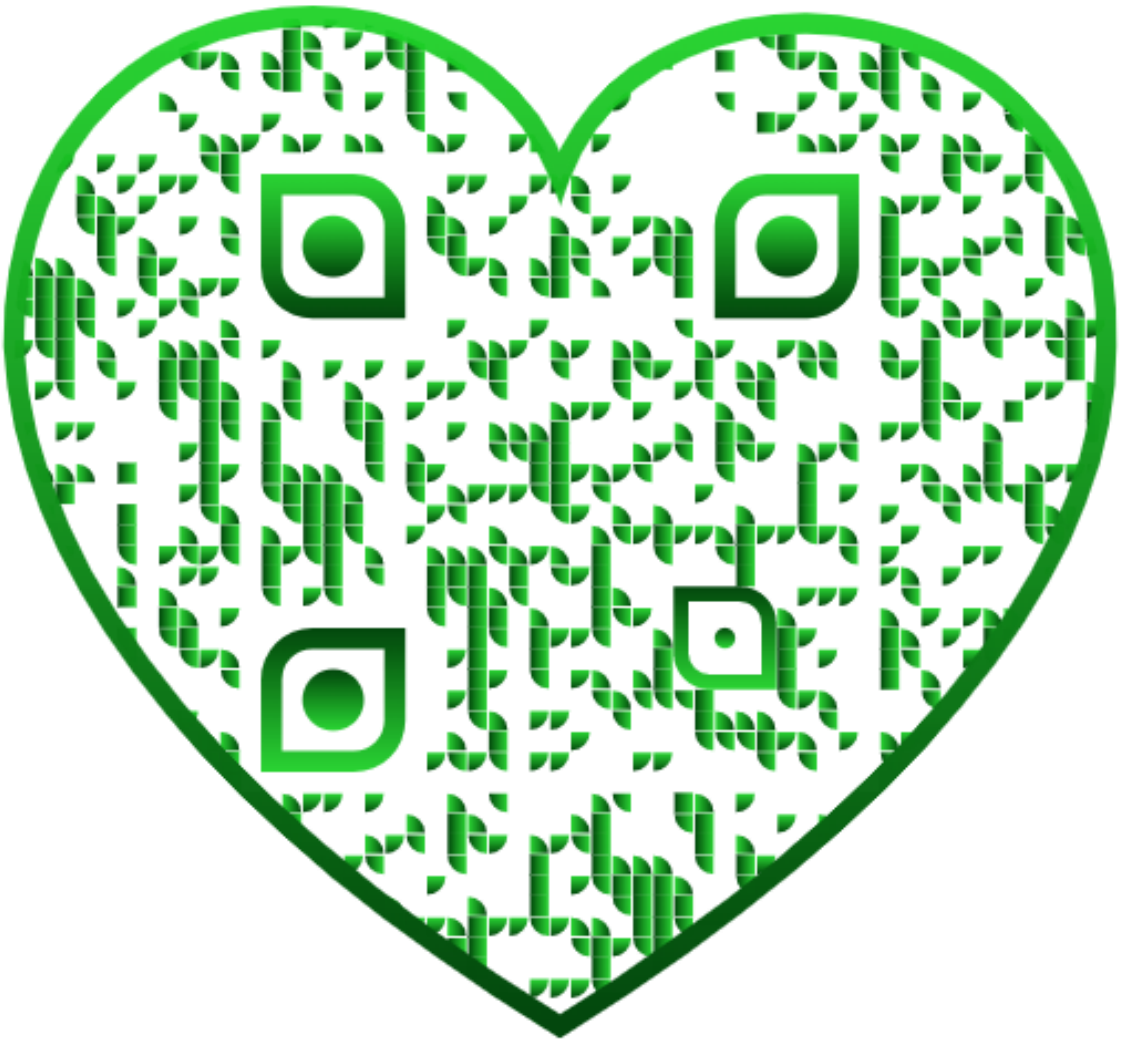
Volume 6, Number 1 November/December 2001





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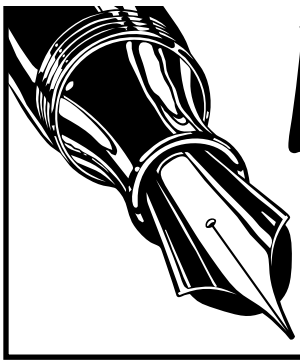


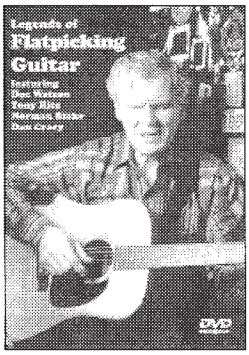
EDITOR'S PAGE

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine would like to express our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the victims of the September 11th tragedies in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all.

We would also like to send our heartfelt gratitude to the hardworking fire fighters, police personnel, and all other workers and volunteers who have been tirelessly working at the "ground zero" site in New York. Your strength and determination are inspiring.

As our nation prepares to seek retribution for these acts of terrorism, we would also like to thank our country's Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines for their service to our country. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your families.

New DVDs from Vestapol



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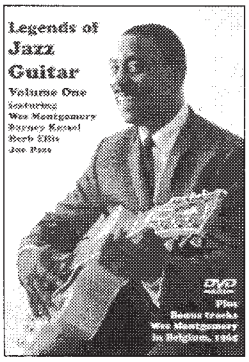

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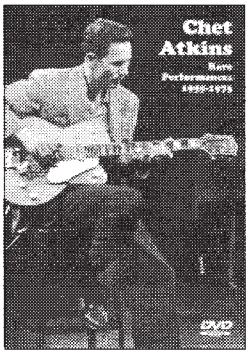
BONUS TRACKS: Wes Montgomery, Belgium (1965) *Impressions, Twisted Blues, Here's That Rainy Day, Jingles, The Boy Next Door*



Merle Travis 1946-1981

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Titles include: No Vacancy (1946), Nine Pound Hammer (1951), Mus'rat (1951), I'm A Natural Born Gamblin' Man (1951), Too Much Sugar For A Dime (1951), Spoonin' Moon (1951), Lost John (1951), Dark As A Dungeon (1951), Petticoat Fever (1951), Sweet Temptation (1951), John Henry (1951), I'll See You In My Dreams (1960), Midnight Special (1968), Cannonball Rag (1970), I Am A Pilgrim (1971), Sixteen Tons, 1977, Smoke, Smoke That Cigarette (1977), Barbecue Rag (1981), I'll See You In My Dreams (1981)

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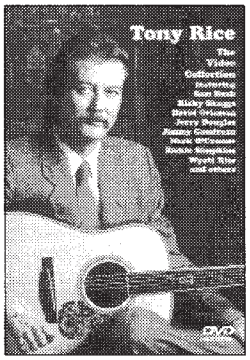

Chet Atkins 1955-1975

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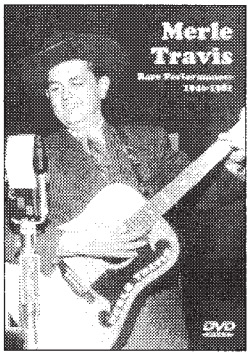
Titles include: ***PURINA SHOW, 1955:*** *The Poor People Of Paris, Side By Side, Makin' Believe •* ***OZARK JUBILEE, 1958:*** *Villa, Say Si Si •* ***NORWAY, 1963:*** *Levee Walking, Wildwood Flower, Yes Ma'am, Malaguena, Medley: Greensleeves/Streets Of Laredo, Peanut Vendor, Tiger Rag •* ***NORWAY (NASHVILLE CAVALCADE), 1973:*** *Alhambra, Black Mountain Rag, Medley: Windy & Warm/ Back Home In Indiana/Country Gentleman/Mr. Sandman/Wildwood Flower/Freight Train, Medley: The Three Bells/I Can't Stop Loving You/Java/He'll Have To Go/When You're Hot You're Hot/Oh Lonesome Me, Just Another Rag, Mr. Bojangles, Missionera, Wheels* ***PORTER WAGONER SHOW, 1973:*** *Muskrat Ramble •* ***POP GOES THE COUNTRY, 1975:*** *Vincent*



Tony Rice - The Video Collection

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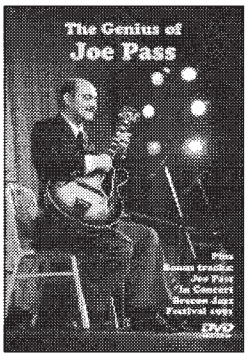
Titles include: ***TONY RICE ALL STAR JAM featuring Tony Rice, Sam Bush, Mark O'Connor, Jerry Douglas, Bela Fleck & Mark Schatz:*** *Red Haired Boy, Blue Railroad Train, I Wonder Where You Are Tonight, White House Blues* ***TONY RICE & FRIENDS featuring Tony Rice, Ricky Skaggs, David Grisman, Mark O'Connor, Jerry Douglas, Rickie Simpkins, Pete Wernick & Del McCoury*** *The Old Home Place, Bluegrass Breakdown* ***TONY RICE UNIT featuring Tony Rice, Wyatt Rice, Jimmy Gaudreau, Rickie Simpkins & Ronnie Simpkins*** *Dusty Miller, He Rode All The Way To Texas Salt Creek, Another Lonesome Day, NinePound Hammer, Darcy Farrow, Crazy Creek, Little Sadie Shadows*



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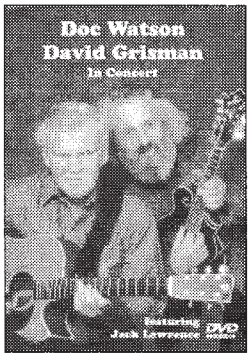
BONUS TRACKS: *All The Things You Are, Medley: Summertime/It Ain't Necessarily So, That's Earl Brother, Beautiful Love, They Can't Take That Away From Me, Joe's Blues*



Doc Watson & David Grisman In Concert

Vestapol 13082DVD $24.95

Titles include: Bye Bye Blues, Shady Grove, Summertime, Sweet Georgia Brown, Hobo Bill's Last Ride, In The Pines. Long Journey Home, Lonesome Moon-light Waltz, EMD, I Don't Love Nobody, Blue Eyed Jane, Kentucky Waltz, Will You Be Loving Another Man, Deep River Blues, Soldier's Joy, Medley: Big Sandy/Salt Creek, Roll In My Sweet Baby's Arms and Roll On Buddy.

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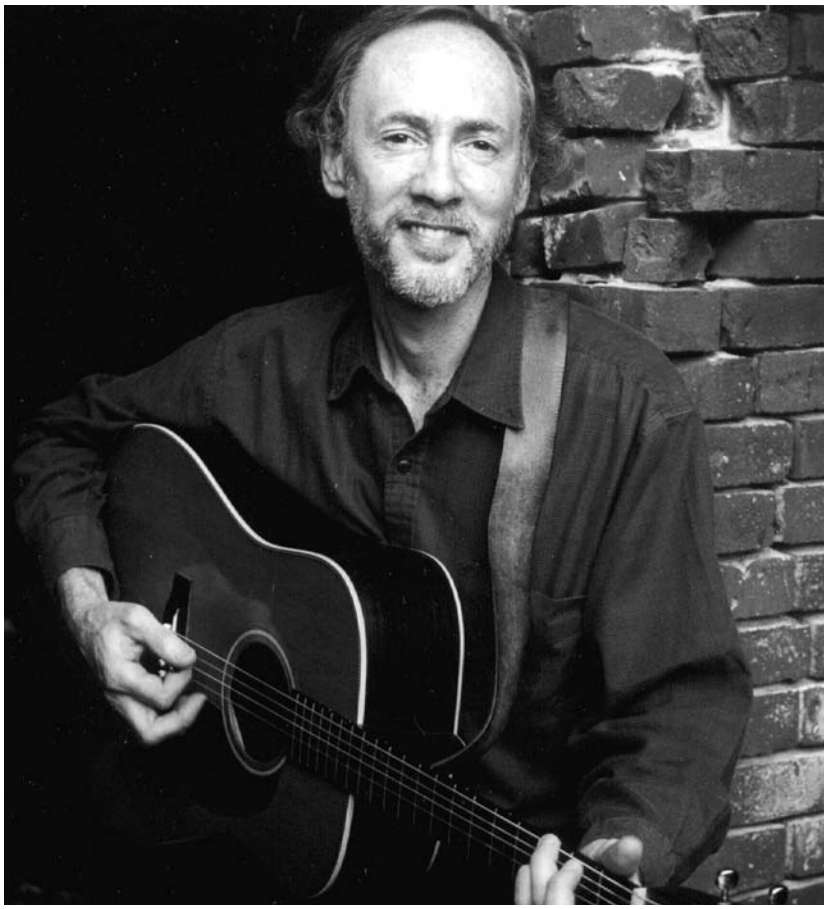
Phil Rosenthal



by Dan Miller

The acoustic guitar's role as a lead instrument in traditional American music is a relatively new occurrence. Although players like Doc Watson, Clarence White, Dan Crary, Norman Blake, Larry Sparks, and Tony Rice had begun to dazzle bluegrass and folk audiences with their lead guitar talents during the 1960s and 70s, and pioneers like George Shuffler had introduced it in the 50s, the acoustic guitar's use as a lead instrument in bluegrass music did not firmly take root until the mid-to-late 70s. During this period of time, and into the 1980s, new bluegrass bands began featuring the guitar as a lead instrument and well established bands began adding lead guitar solos to their arrangements. As a result, a new generation of flatpickers began to play a prominent role in bluegrass music. One of the best flatpickers to emerge during this era was the Seldom Scene's Phil Rosenthal.

Although Phil established himself as one of the top lead guitar players in bluegrass music during the nine years that he played with the Seldom Scene, the band did not originally hire him for his lead guitar talents. In fact, prior to joining the Seldom Scene in 1977, Phil had always played either banjo or mandolin in all of the bands he had played in since the mid-1960s. The Seldom Scene hired Phil for his vocal talent—his ability to play lead guitar and write songs were simply added bonuses. When Phil joined the band, he was replacing their former guitar player and lead singer, John Starling. Starling, who left the Seldom Scene to focus on his medical career, was not a lead guitar player and thus the Scene's music had never included flatpicked guitar solos. Phil recalls, "Most of the arrangements were set on the tunes that they had already recorded and they did not include lead guitar. During the first year I didn't get the chance to play as much lead as I wanted."

In 1979, the Seldom Scene prepared to go into the studio to record their first full recording with Rosenthal on guitar and lead vocals, *Act 4* (Phil and Starling had split the vocal duties in 1977 on the Scene's gospel album *Baptizing*). As the Scene worked up new material, Phil's guitar became more prominently featured in the Scene's music. From that point forward, until Phil left the band in 1986, Phil's smooth, fluid, and engaging guitar solos were as much a part of the Seldom Scene's sound as Duffey's soaring tenor voice, Auldridge's Dobro, or Eldridge's banjo. Phil's talent, combined with the band's prominence, led to Phil becoming one of the best-known flatpickers in bluegrass music during that era.

By leaving the Seldom Scene in 1986, Phil may have left the flatpicking limelight, but he never left the music. A year or two before leaving the band, Phil had established his own record label and recording studio—something that he had dreamed of doing since he was twelve years old. Since 1985 he has played on, produced, engineered, and released 20 recordings on his American Melody label. To date, the majority of these recordings feature bluegrass and folk music for children.

Phil's initial interest in producing a bluegrass music recording for children was motivated by the fact that he had two young children (Naomi was 7, Daniel was 4) and there was nothing in the genre for kids. In 1985 he released his label's first project, *Turkey In The Straw*, to great success. That was followed by another children's album by Jonathan Edwards, *Little Hands*, and a third album, *Grandma's Patchwork Quilt*. Phil's goal on these and subsequent projects was to "make music that was accessible to kids but didn't talk down to them musically or otherwise." He says, "The songs are about things that kids can relate to, but the

picking and arrangements are for any age. I've tried to keep it interesting musically so that adults will also enjoy it."

Learning the Trade

Phil Rosenthal became interesting in writing, arranging, and recording music on acoustic stringed instruments soon after he started learning how to play at the age of twelve. In fact, he says that the reason he learned how to play more than one instrument was so that he could record the songs he wrote and make them more interesting. He explains, "I had a two-track stereo tape machine and started making tapes of the songs I wrote. I fantasized about having my own record label. I started learning how to play the banjo when I was twelve. When I was about fourteen I talked my folks into buying me a cheap mandolin. I also started learning how to play my brother's guitar. Banjo was my main instrument, but I was interested in learning mandolin and guitar so that I could make tapes and have a fuller sound."

Phil's interest in music began with piano lessons when he was nine or ten. By the time he was twelve he had fallen in love with the sound of the banjo played in the folk music style of Pete Seeger. He got a banjo and a copy of Seeger's book and began to teach himself how to play.

When Phil was about thirteen or fourteen he was in a record store and saw a record that had a photo of a guy holding a banjo on the album cover. He thought it looked interesting and decided to buy it to see what the music sounded like. He found out later that the guy on the cover was Earl Scruggs and the album was Lester Flatt & Earl Scrugg's *Foggy Mountain Jamboree*. This was his first exposure to bluegrass music and he was immediately captivated by it.

Phil admits that as much as he loved the sound of Earl's banjo, he was mystified by what Earl was doing. He was able to find a banjo teacher near his home in Guilford, Connecticut, and, although he brought all of his folk banjo material to the first lesson, he was pleased to discover that the teacher played bluegrass banjo. He took banjo lessons for the next six or eight months to establish a firm foundation and then began to teach himself, by listening to records, from that point on.

By the time Phil was fourteen he was writing and recording his own material and teaching himself how to play the mandolin and guitar in order to overdub parts on his two-track stereo recorder. He says his older brother taught him his first few chords on the guitar so he could play rhythm. He then learned some more guitar chords out of a book and taught himself some Carter-style leads.

Seeing how interested his son was in music, Phil's father encouraged him to start studying music seriously by learning how to read music and train in the classical methods. Phil assured his father that it wasn't necessary to learn how to read music in order to be a good musician, but his father wasn't so sure about that. In 1965, when Phil was in eleventh grade, Pete Seeger was holding a fundraiser that Phil and his father attended. After the event, Phil's father approached Seeger and said, "My son is learning how to play the banjo, but he tells me he doesn't feel like he has to know how to read music!" To the elder Rosenthal's surprise, Seeger confirmed what Phil had been telling him.

Throughout his high school years, Phil continued to focus on the banjo and taught himself primarily by listening to records. In 1966, during his senior year, he attended a hootenanny in a neighboring town and met two other guys his age who had performed bluegrass music during the show. Phil exchanged numbers with them and shortly thereafter the three formed a trio with guitar, banjo, and mandolin. One of the trio's members, Dave Kiphuth, remains one of Phil's musical partners to this day. Phil says that during his high school years he played a few gigs with the trio and also played banjo in a jug band.

In the summer of 1966, Phil attended the Newport Folk Festival and had the opportunity to see a banjo workshop given by Earl Scruggs, Pete Seeger, Bill Keith, and Bobby Thompson. At a picking session after the workshop, Phil was able to talk with Bill Keith and ask him some questions about the banjo. That same summer he also attended Carlton Haney's second bluegrass festival in Finecastle, Virginia. He says, "I got to see everyone who I had ever heard of in bluegrass playing live at the same show." When asked if he did much jamming at the festival, Phil said that he spent all of his time watching and recording the shows and taking photos.

In the fall of 1966 Phil entered college at the University of Chicago. While in college he was a member of the Chicago area Folklore Society. The society promoted a folk festival every year, presenting a broad array of traditional music. One year Flatt & Scruggs played at the event and, as a member of the society, Phil had a chance to go backstage and watch the band warm up. He says, "It was amazing to see how effortlessly they blended together." After the show, Phil volunteered to help the band

Phil Rosenthal with Old Dog, 1976. Left to right: Barry Stockwell, Beth Sommers, Phil Rosenthal, Bruce Stockwell

Phil Rosenthal with the Seldom Scene, November, 1977. Left to right: John Duffey, Tom Gray, Phil Rosenthal

get to their hotel and offered to carry Earl's banjo. He got to carry the banjo but admits that he was too shy to talk with Earl.

During his college years in Chicago Phil had the opportunity to perform on his first professional recording. Answering an ad in *Bluegrass Unlimited* magazine placed by a fiddle player who was looking for Chicago-area musicians to record with, Phil met Gurney Adkins. Gurney, a transplanted Kentuckian, was looking to record some of his fiddle music and needed a band to back him up. Phil offered his services on the banjo and brought in a university friend who played guitar. Gurney found a bass player and the group began rehearsing for the recording. Once they felt like they were ready, they booked time at the university radio station, cut a half a dozen tunes, and subsequently released a 45 RPM record.

Phil graduated from college in 1970 with a degree in English. He returned to Connecticut and got his one and only "non-musical" job—but it actually ended up involving music. Phil was hired by the New Haven Library to run their special programs. One of the programs which Phil initiated after being hired was an after school music program for kids. In addition to performing at the library, he also took his show to local schools. Phil stayed with that job for about a year before giving it up to join a band and play music full time.

Apple Country

While Phil was away at college in Chicago, his old picking partner Dave Kiphuth had joined a band that played on campus at Yale. Not long after Phil came back home, the mandolin player left the band and Dave invited Phil to join the band on mandolin. With Phil as the new mandolin player, the band renamed itself Apple Country. Apple Country consisted of Phil on mandolin, Dave Kiphuth on banjo, Mark Rickart on guitar, Gene LaBrie on bass, and Bud Morrisroe on fiddle. In addition to playing at festivals, the band had a weekly gig at the Enormous Room every Thursday night. A half-hour of the performance broadcast live over the radio every weekend helped boost the band's popularity. Phil stayed with that band for four years playing mandolin, sharing the lead vocals, and writing songs. They cut an album in 1974 with Phil playing the mandolin and overdubbing some lead guitar.

When asked about his lead guitar work in those days, Phil said, "I started learning lead guitar after hearing Clarence White. The first time I heard Clarence it was like the first time I heard Earl." Phil first heard Clarence on the *New Dimensions in Banjo & Bluegrass* with Eric Weissberg. Later he heard *Appalachian Swing* and then also got a hold of some of the Kentucky Colonels live recordings that had begun to circulate. Phil remembers, "One of the first things that really blew me away was Clarence's solo on 'Huckleberry Hornpipe.' After hearing it, I had to sit down and learn that solo note-for-note. I think that solo is a good starting point for anyone wanting to learn Clarence's style." As a result of his interest in Clarence's guitar playing Phil says that during 1972 and 1973 he was playing more guitar than banjo.

While Phil was playing in Apple Country, the band had played a few gigs in New York City (one of those gigs was opening for Lester Flatt's band). Phil says that after the New York shows, he would always go to Jim McGuire's place for the great jam sessions Jim would host. McGuire, a prominent country and bluegrass photographer (now working in Nashville), was also a Dobro player. It was through Jim that Phil first met the members of the Seldom Scene.

The Song Writer

In 1972 Apple Country was playing at a festival in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and the Seldom Scene was also on the bill. Jim McGuire was friends with the Scene's Dobro player, Mike Auldridge, and had produced Mike's first solo album on Tacoma Records. Jim had told Mike about Phil's songwriting talents and introduced Phil to Mike and Ben Eldridge at the Gettysburg festival. Phil played some of his original tunes for Mike and Ben and they asked him if he would mind making a tape for them. When he got back home, Phil made the tape and sent it to Mike. Shortly before the Seldom Scene released their third album, *Act 3*, John Starling sent Phil a tape of the Scene performing two of his tunes, "Muddy Waters," and "Willie Boy," that they had cut for the album. Phil said, "That was exciting." In addition to becoming one of the Seldom Scene's most popular tunes, "Muddy Waters" has also been recorded by Bill Monroe and Johnny Cash.

Jim McGuire moved from New York to Nashville in about 1974 and urged Phil to come down and join him. Jim had found a local band that needed someone and told Phil, "With your songwriting talent, you could do things here." In 1974 Phil quit Apple Country and moved to Nashville with his wife, Beth. He began to try and push his songs to the publishing companies, but eventually became frustrated because the publishing companies wanted "formula

writing." He said, "I tried formula writing, but I came to the conclusion that I wanted to keep doing the type of writing that had been doing before." Phil stayed in Nashville for about eight months before moving back to Connecticut. High points of his stay in Nashville came from hanging out at Jim's studio and meeting writers and performers such as Jerry Jeff Walker, Guy Clark, and John Hiatt.

Old Dog

Back in New England, in 1975, Phil formed a group called Old Dog. Phil played mandolin and some guitar, his wife Beth played the bass, Bruce Stockwell played the banjo, and Bruce's brother Barry played the guitar. Shortly after the group had formed, Phil sent a tape of the band to Mike Auldridge. Mike liked what he heard and invited the band to come down and play at the Birchmere in Alexandria, Virginia. Old Dog happily accepted the offer. After the show, Auldridge came backstage and asked if the band would join him on a solo recording that he was getting ready to cut for Flying Fish Records.

Old Dog went into the studio to record with Auldridge in August of 1977. During one of the sessions, Phil looked up and saw that Tom Gray, Ben Eldridge, and John Duffey were in the control booth. He was impressed that other members of the Seldom Scene were interested in coming out and supporting Mike in the studio. Little did he know at the time that they were there to scout Phil as a replacement for John Starling. After the session they asked Phil if he would be willing to try out for the guitar and lead vocalist spot in the Seldom Scene. At first, Phil declined.

Initially Phil was torn between trying out for a spot in one of the country's top bluegrass bands or staying with Old Dog. Old Dog was certain to gain attention for themselves when Flying Fish released the *Mike Auldridge & Old Dog* album. His initial reaction was to turn down the offer and to stay with Old Dog, so he told the Scene that joining their band was not something that he wanted to do at that time. However, driving back that evening to the home of friends with whom they were staying, Phil and Beth began discussing the pros and cons. Phil said, "The pros started outweighing the cons, so when we got to our friends' home I called and told them I did want to try out for the job."

The try-out was to take place a month later when the Scene was scheduled to perform at a festival in New Jersey. During that month Phil studied all of John Starling's parts on the band's recordings. The try-out for the band occurred in a hotel room full of people. Phil had all of the parts down, but the noisy crowd in the room was a little distracting. One of the band members suggested moving to a quieter spot and the try-out continued. Afterwards, the band members told Phil that they liked what they had heard, but they had a few other guys that they needed to try before they made their decision. Shortly afterward Phil got a conference call from the band members saying that the job was his and that they needed him to be down in Washington, D.C. in three weeks to start. Although Phil was excited about starting his new job, he was also sorry to give up Old Dog. He says, "I can't say enough good about Bruce and Barry Stockwell."

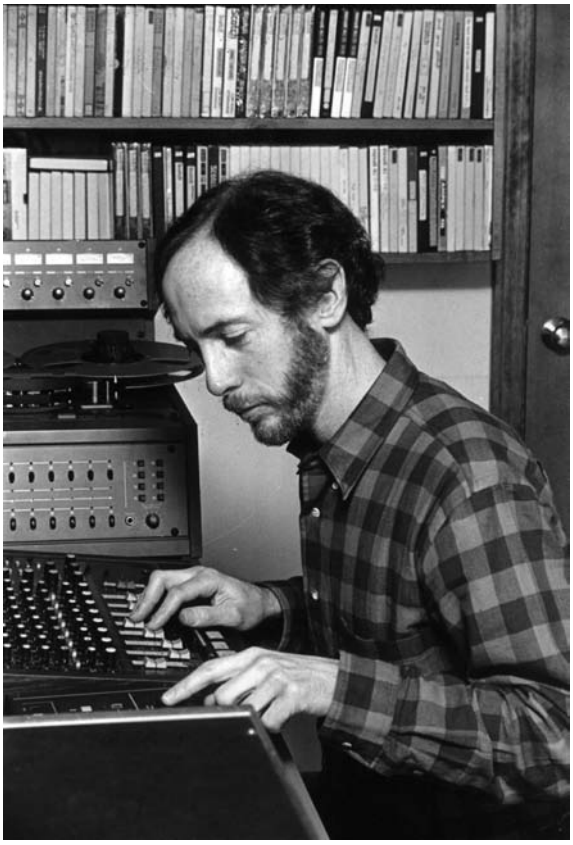
The Seldom Scene Years

The Seldom Scene played a weekly gig at the Birchmere and John Starling was well loved by the hometown crowd there. The first time Phil took the stage at the Birchmere as John's replacement he says that he felt like he was really being put to the test. The third tune that the band performed that night was Phil's own "Muddy Waters," and the crowd gave him a warm and welcoming ovation. Phil says, "That made me feel good."

Although Phil had done some lead guitar work with both Apple Country and Old Dog, the job with the Seldom Scene was the first band job he had as a full time guitar player. Regarding the transition, Phil said, "Having listened to the music so long, I knew what to do on the guitar, but now I had to do it." During his time with the Seldom Scene he says that he learned a lot about the function of the guitar in a band. He learned how to use the guitar to fill out the band sound and says, "You've also got to be there with solid rhythm all the time. Tom (Gray) is so rock solid on bass, it made it easier." Phil also recalls, "Duffey had certain feeling about the guitar and he wanted to make sure that the 'rhythm guitar is out there good and loud.' So I had to learn to play harder with my right hand to fill out the sound for rhythm and not leave any holes."

What has always impressed me about Phil's guitar work is his rich tone and fluidness. When asked about his recommendations for beginning flatpickers, Phil said that for him a lot of it involves getting the correct feel with the right hand. He said, "You have to have a loose right hand and learn to coax the sound out of the instrument, not just bang it out. When the right hand is too tight the sound is harsher." He also recommends that beginners start with learning how to play rhythm and simple bass runs. Once the rhythm/bass run skill is developed, the lead guitar solos can come out of that. When he has taught in the past, Phil says that he has always taught technique based around tunes instead of

Phil Rosenthal with the Seldom Scene at the Birchmere, 1985. Phil is pictured here with Mike Auldridge.



Phil in his studio, 1989

scales and exercises and he recommends that beginners learn the alternating down-up-down picking pattern (downstrokes on the down beats).

Since the Seldom Scene's repertoire covered a wide range of musical styles, I asked Phil how he approached his rhythmic support role with the band. He said, "On the traditional bluegrass songs I tried to provide a punchy, solid, basic rhythm. On the more contemporary songs there is space for more intricate runs and back-up. There is not the need for that hard driving beat and thus there is more room to experiment. Depending on the tune, there was a need to try and vary what I did. For something like 'Stomping At the Savoy' I supplied a more percussive and muted rhythm. For slower things there were places where I would add some fingerpicking combined with the flatpick. It all depended on the tune and the feel."

Although Phil was originally inspired on guitar by Clarence White, he points to Doc Watson as "always being a favorite," and cites Lester Flatt as being someone who was "clean, solid, and there just enough." He says that his phrases and ideas on guitar have come more from the other instruments he plays rather than from other guitar things that he has heard. Phil says, "I think that knowing those other instruments makes me a better player on guitar. I have always taken ideas from the banjo and mandolin and adapted them to guitar."

Phil was a member of the Seldom Scene from September of 1977 through 1986. He says highlights of his years with the band include playing a lot of the big festivals, traveling to California for the first time, playing in Nashville on the Opry stage, traveling to France and Japan, performing on six albums with the band, and performing at the White House for Jimmy Carter. He recalls that when the band performed at the White House, Jimmy Carter introduced each member of the group by name without using cue cards. President Carter did such a good job with the introduction that the band asked him if he wanted to go on the road and introduce them at other gigs, but the offer was declined.

Phil enjoyed the band's casual approach to music and the looseness on stage. Although he was a little frustrated during the first few years (since all of the band's songs were arranged for John Starling's vocal range and did not include lead guitar), as the band went into the studio to record new projects, the new material was arranged in a key which was more natural for Phil's vocal range and lead guitar parts were added. Phil also was able to insert a few instrumental numbers that featured his lead guitar work into the Seldom Scene's repertoire. Songs like "Alabama Jubilee," "Beaumont Rag," and his own "Indian Summer," gave Phil a chance to step out and showcase his flatpicking talent.

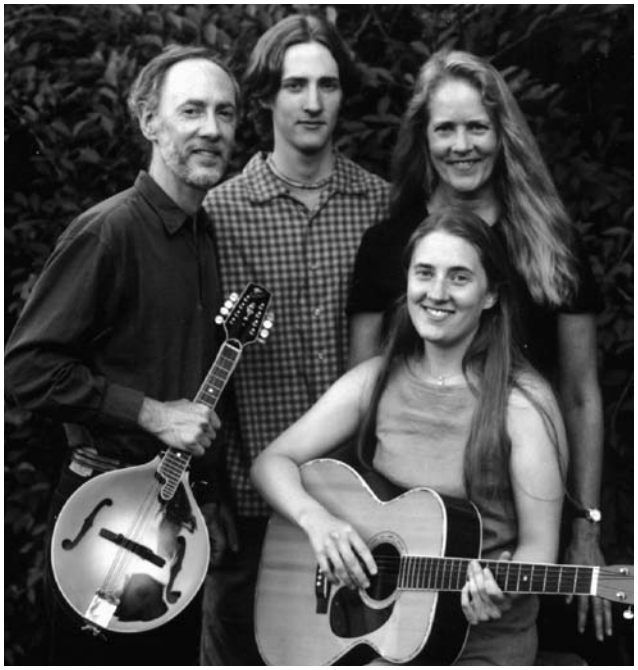
Owning A Label

During his years with the Seldom Scene, Phil never gave up his interest in recording. He says that he has always preferred studio work to live performance because in the studio everything is new. He admits that playing at great venues in front of great crowds is exciting, but says that even though the Seldom Scene prided themselves on never having a set list, playing the same material show after show can get old. Phil says, "I think the recording process is more challenging and is a better creative outlet for me. It is fun to be able to play different instruments and I like the recording process."

Phil's love for recording and his preference for studio playing led him to make a move to fulfill his childhood dream of owning his own studio and record label. In 1984 he invested in studio quality recording equipment, recorded his bluegrass album for kids, *Turkey In The Straw*, and, in 1985, released it on his own label, American Melody.

After Phil got his label off of the ground with *Turkey In The Straw*, his dream was to be able to support his family by recording instead of performing. In 1986, the Seldom Scene afforded him that opportunity when they made the decision to start doing more hard-edged bluegrass material and started searching for someone else to sing lead whose voice suited that style. Phil says, "Had the band not made that decision, I might have stayed for a few more years, but I'm glad that it happened when it did. Being in the band brought success and prominence. Leaving the band pushed me to do what I know and enjoy—writing, recording, and running a label."

Although local Washington area musicians urged Phil to stay in the area, he decided to move back home to Connecticut after leaving the Seldom Scene. He says,



The Rosenthal Family:
Phil, Daniel, Beth, and Naomi (seated)

Phil Rosenthal with Bluegrass Reunion, April 2000. Left to right: Phil Zimmerman, Phil, Stacy Phillips, Beth Sommers

"I thought it would be nice for my kids to grow up and think of New England as their home." After the move, Phil plunged into the record company full time. He and his wife did everything—they performed, engineered, designed the artwork and packaging, and promoted and distributed the product. Phil recalls, "It was a stressful time, but as more recordings came out, and we became better established, it got easier."

While the majority of the twenty recordings released on the American Melody label have been projects for children, that is starting to change. Last year Phil released *This Land Is Your Land*, a recording of classic American folk songs, which has received rave reviews, including a good plug in *Parade Magazine*. *A Folk Song Christmas*, featuring Phil and several other artists is the label's brand new release. Additionally, Phil is working with his daughter, Naomi (now 23), on an album that has her singing lead on her original songs.

Both of Phil's children "grew up on the label" and have appeared on numerous projects vocally as well as instrumentally over the years. Last year Rounder released a Rosenthal Family project called *Folksongs & Bluegrass for Children*, which included a collection of songs from various American Melody projects and some new material Phil's family recorded for the project. Phil's son, Daniel, now 19, is now attending the New England Conservatory of Music studying jazz trumpet and adds both trumpet and flugelhorn to American Melody's other new release Folk Song Lullabies.

Back On Stage

After staying away from performing in public for over a decade, the live performance bug bit Phil once again a few years ago. About two years ago Phil and Beth began performing in New England in a trio with Dobro/fiddle player Stacy Phillips. He and Beth have also gotten together with Phil's old picking partner Dave Kiphuth (on banjo) and Phil Zimmerman (on mandolin) to perform a series of monthly shows at the community center in Phil's home town. As the band Bluegrass Reunion, they rent the hall and put on the show. The series picked up momentum quickly and has been so successful that the group is currently working up material for a recording. After putting on a reunion show last April, and performing to a sell-out crowd, Dave, Phil and the former members of Apple Country have also started working on a recording.

Although Phil has achieved great success over the past fifteen years recording children's music and releasing it on his own label, his music career is currently moving in new directions. Not only has he begun to play live music again, but his label is working on projects that are aimed at an adult audience. This is great news for flatpicking fans who fondly remember Phil's years with the Seldom Scene. Welcome back Phil!

Phil Rosenthal
Selected Discography

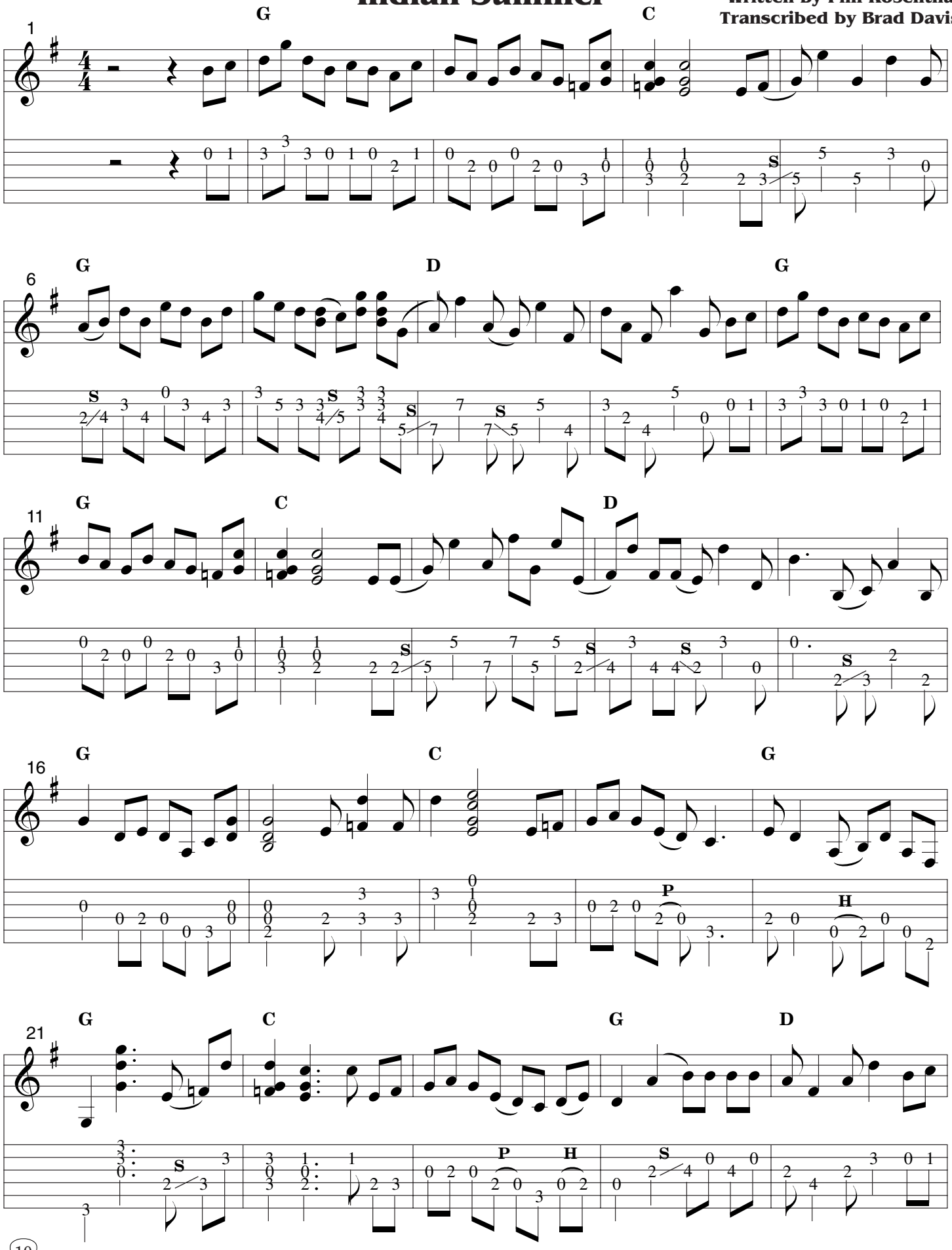
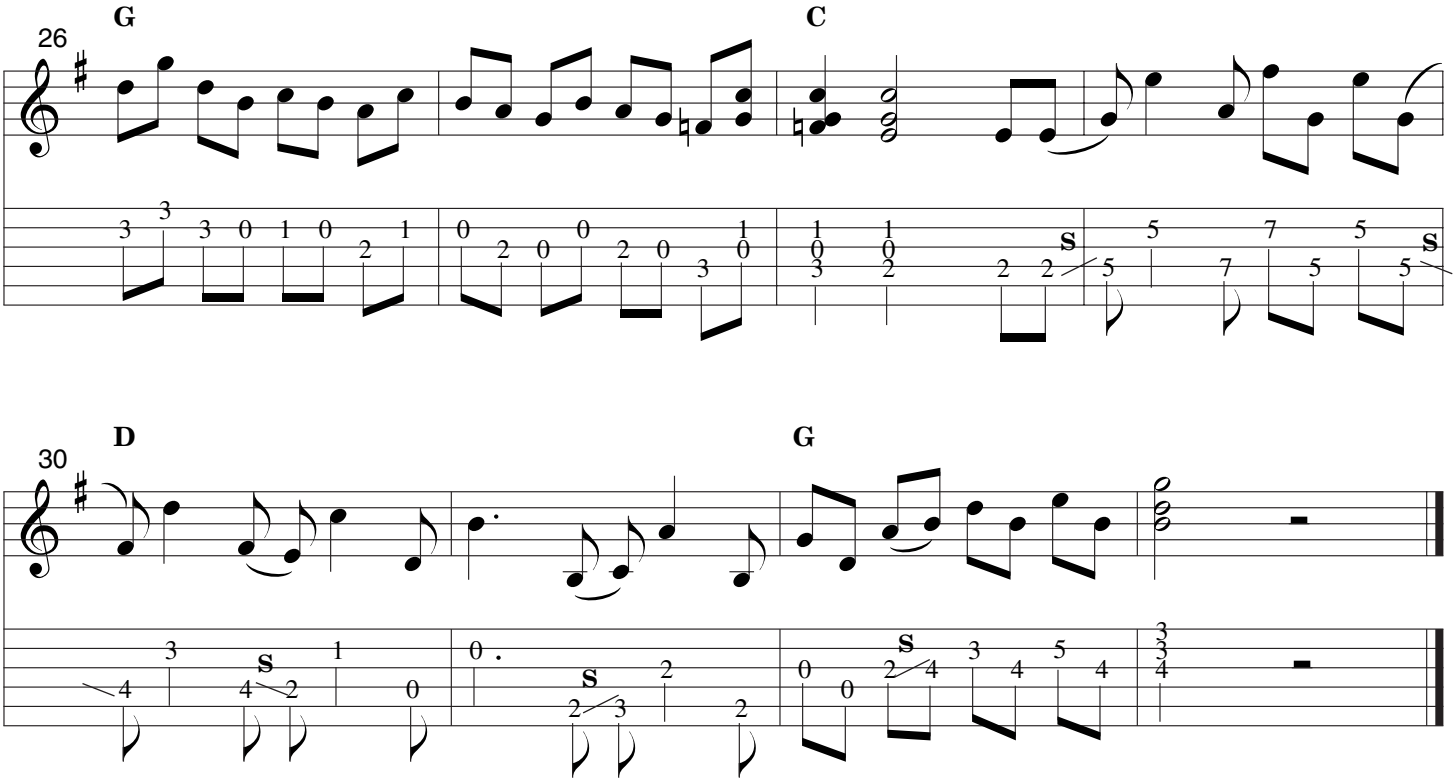
Apple Country (1974) Orchard Records
Mike Auldridge & Old Dog (1977) FF 054
Seldom Scene recordings:
Baptizing (1977) Rebel, REB-CD-1573
Act Four (1979) Sugar Hill, SHCD-3709
Bluegrass: The World's Greatest Show (1980) SHCD-2201
After Midnight (1981) SHCD-3721
At the Scene (1983) SHCD-3736
Blue Ridge (with Jonathan Edwards) (1985) SHCD-3747
Scene 20 (1992) SHCD-2501/02
Solo recordings:
Indian Summer (1978) Flying Fish 078
A Matter of Time (1981) Sierra HS 67004
Folksongs and Bluegrass for Children (2000) Rounder ROCD 8099-2
Solo recordings on American Melody:
Turkey in the Straw (1985) AM-CD-5101
The Paw Paw Patch (1987) AM-C-104
Chickens in the Garden (1990) AM-C-107
Comin' Round the Mountain (1993) AM-C-114
The Green Grass Grew All Around (1995) AM-CD-5116
Animal Songs (1996) AM-CD-5117
This Land is Your Land (1999) AM-CD-5118
Folk Song Lullabies (2001) AM-CD-5119
Other American Melody recordings featuring Phil:
Jonathan Edwards, *Little Hands* (1987) AM-CD-5102
Grandma's Patchwork Quilt (1987) AM-C-103
One Wide River (1989) AM-C-105
The Juniper Tree (1994) AM-C-115
A Folk Song Christmas (2001) AM-CD-5120
Other recordings featuring Phil:
Bryan Bowers, *Home, Home on the Road* (1980) Flying Fish 90091
Bryan Bowers, *By Heart* (1984) F F 90313
Beppe Gambetta, *Dialogs* (1988) HF-005

Phil's Guitars

During his first six or seven years with the Seldom Scene, Phil played a 1957 Martin D-28. However, in 1985 he was visiting Gruhn's Guitar shop in Nashville and ran across a D-28 herringbone reissue that he fell in love with. He has primarily played the 1985 Martin D-28 reissue since that time. He also has owned a 1953 Martin D-18. He says, "I like the sound of the D-18 for sitting around the house, it is not as boomy as the D-28. But the D-18 doesn't have the punch for rhythm that I get from the D-28." About seven or eight years ago Phil also bought a new Martin D-18 reissue. For fingerpicking, Phil uses a Flammang Guitar made by David Flammang.

When recording his Dreadnought in the studio, Phil likes to stereo mic, placing a KM-84 near the strings where the neck joins the body and a larger diaphragm mic, like a TLM-103, just behind the bridge. He pans in a stereo spread. He feels like this mic arrangement picks up the resonant sound of the whole instrument saying, "You get the sparkly sound and the rich mellow sound too."

Indian Summer

Written by Phil Rosenthal
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Indian Summer (con't)

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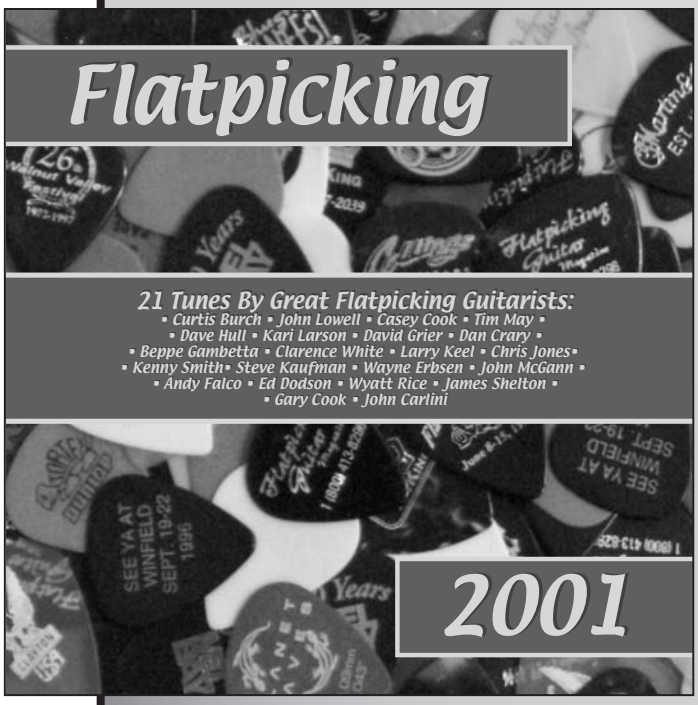
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6 *Just A Town* **Chris Jones**
7 *Song For Emily* **David Grier & Kenny Smith**
8 *Farewell Blues* **Clarence White**
9 *Jerry's Farewell* **Larry Keel**
10 *Little Stretch of Road* **John McGann** & Chris Moore
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14 *Silver Bell* **Wayne Erbsen**
15 *Light of the Moon* **Tim May** w/Crucial Smith
16 *Sailor's Hornpipe* **Dave Hull & Kari Larson**
17 *John Henry* **Gary Cook**
18 *Katy Dear* **James Shelton & George Shuffler**
19 *More Pretty Girls Than One* **Ed Dodson** & Skip Kelley
20 *Grismill* **Casey Cook** w/The Dappled Grays
21 *First Noel* **John Carlini**

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Elzic's Farewell

by Craig Vance

The version of "Elzic's Farewell" that I have tabbed out for you is very close to Norman Blake's version on his 1985 *Lighthouse On the Shore* recording (Rounder 0211). I was on the road with Frank Wakefield in the late fall of '85 when we crossed paths with Norman and Nancy Blake and James Bryan. They were in Maggie Valley, NC to tape *Fire on the Mountain*, which was a great bluegrass/ acoustic show on TNN hosted by David Holt. Several acts recorded that evening for future programs. After the taping, and removing the layers of television makeup, we got together to jam with the folks who were there for the day.

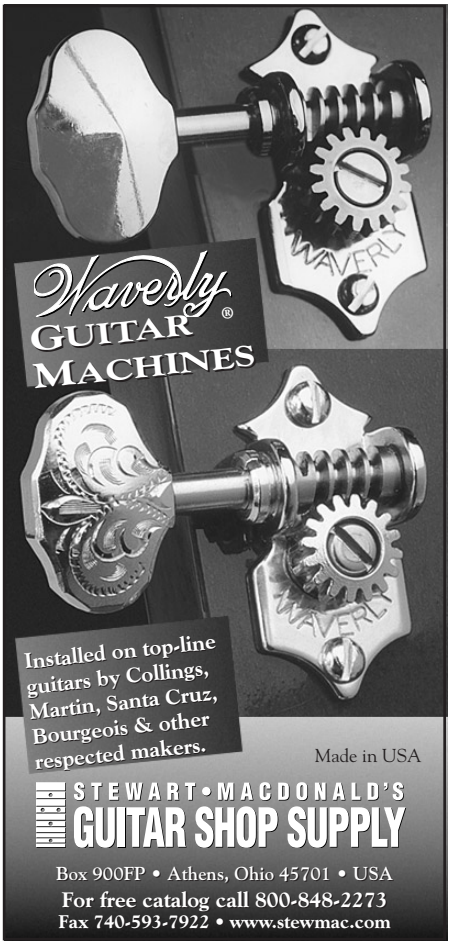
After picking a few tunes with Norman, he asked if I'd ever heard this tune called "Elzic's Farewell." I hadn't, but when he told me that it was on his new album I knew immediately that it would be one that I wanted to learn.

I picked up that LP when we got home from the tour and just about wore clean through to the other side of the vinyl by repeatedly playing this tune. It is fairly easy to play once you get the format down.

The tune has three distinct parts. Here's the formula, in short:

A part 3-times, B part 2-times, C part 2-times, B part 2-times. Then it's back to the head again.

Craig Vance is currently the lead guitar player for the McKrells, an upstate New York based band which features a unique musical blend of Celtic, American folk, bluegrass, and country. His guitar work can also be heard on Frank Wakefield's newest project.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Elzic's Farewell

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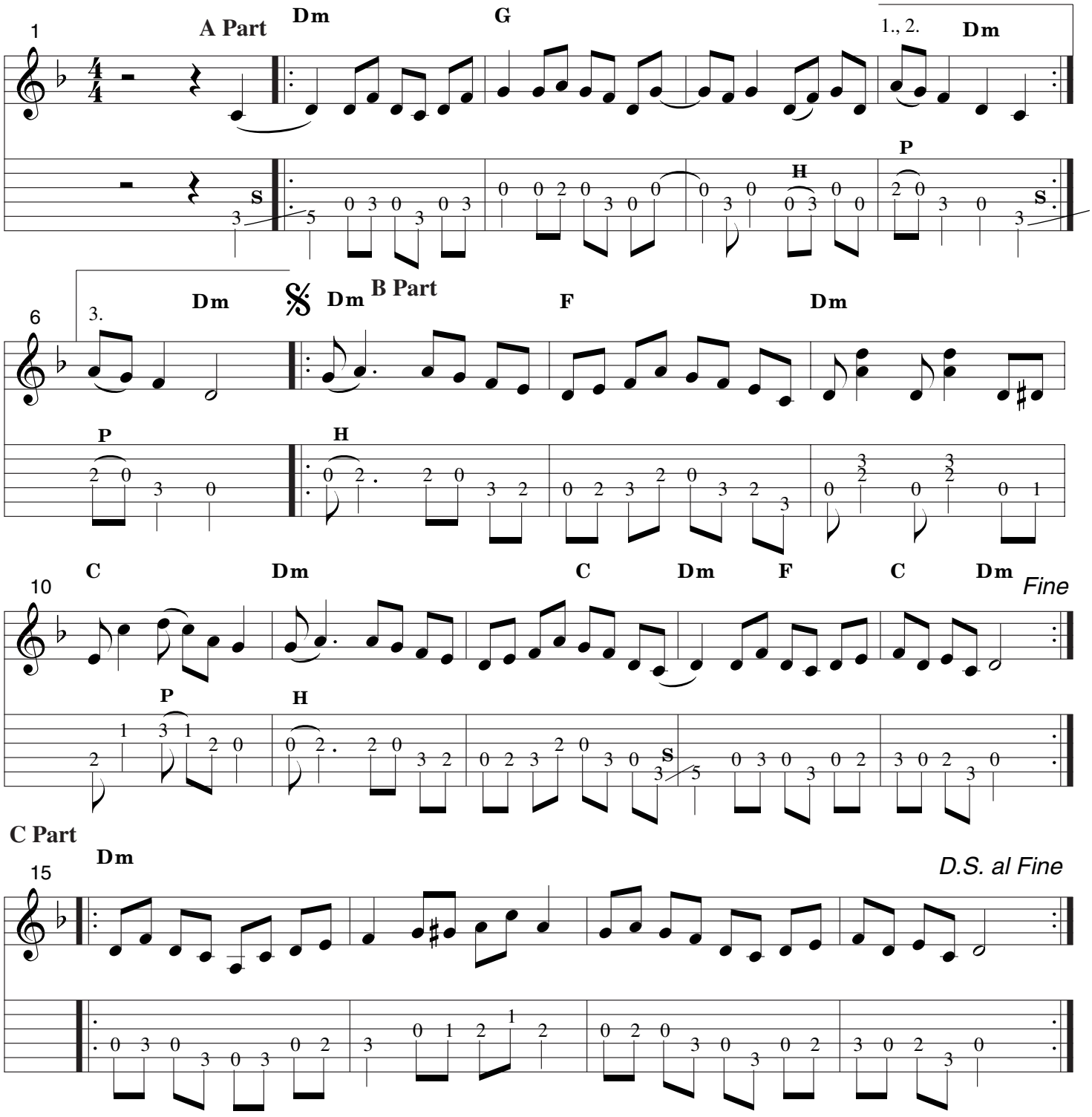
Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee

Get out your Guitar!

I've got an idea. Get out your guitar! (This is a hands-on article that will make little or no sense if you don't have your guitar in hand.) We're going to play a little game to help develop your understanding of the framework of songs. So what is the framework of a song? It's the "chord progression." The chords to a song make up the chord progression. If you will, please play 4 beats of G, 4 beats of C, 4 beats of D, and then 4 beats of G again. I'm sure that was a familiar sound for you. It felt and sounded a little bit like many of the songs that you've played before.

Now let's introduce an E minor into the chord progression inserting it between G and C (i.e., G, Em, C, D, G). OK, that sounds and feels sort of familiar. Let's think of G as home plate, E minor as first base, C as second base, D as third base, and back to G again for home plate.

Next, let's put 4 beats of G between every chord. In other words, our chord progression will now be: G, Em, G, C, G, D, G. OK, that was fun (and sounded fairly musical). What a weird way to run the bases, going back to home plate after every base. That umpire will surely throw us out of the game.

Now let's substitute A, in place of the E-minor and play: G, A, C, D, G. What did that sound like? What did that feel like? What did that look like?

Now: G, A, G, C, G, D, G. Again, experience these sensations. We're not doing this exercise to improve our chord changing. We're doing it to build on the most common chord progressions that are found in the music which our songs are structured from.

Now let's add A minor to this process, inserting it after the C chord from the first progression: G, C, Am, D, G. OK, now: G, C, G, Am, G, D, G. Gosh, who knows, we might get an idea for writing a song somewhere along the way in this little game.

Next let's not substitute A minor for C, but instead let's use A minor in place of E minor. G, Am, C, D, G. Now: G, Am, G, C, G, D, G. (Think of each of these little "progressions" as a mini-song.)

Now let's throw in a B7 as a substitute for the Em. G, B7, C, D, G. Fingers getting a little sore yet? Stop if they are. You can continue tomorrow. Now: G, B7, G, C, G, D, G. (Can you hum a little melody along as you play thru these chords?) See where the chords lead your voice…(as long as no one is listening). Who knows, you might stumble onto your own melody.

Now, instead of B7, let's use E, and instead of C, let's substitute A. G, E, A, D, G. OK, how about: G, E, G, A, G, D, G. (I think this one was a little less like a normal song than some of the others, but hey, its art, or maybe science?)

Now let's make it really lonesome and use F instead of E minor: G, F, C, D, G. Now Ralph Stanley will be proud of us. How about: G, F, G, C, G, D, G. Or how about substituting G7 for E-minor: G, G7, C, D, G. Or: G, G7, C, G, G7, C, D, G.

All of these sounds are "musical devices." All of these sounds effect our emotions. All of these progressions were from only one key, the key of G. We can simply experience them by playing them, or we can academically learn the blackboard formula that they represent. In this exercise, we only wanted to play some combinations, and let the experience do the talking. You might get an idea for a song as a result of playing this game. You might get an idea for a melody or an instrumental. You might get sore fingers or some chord changing practice, or find a totally different combination of chords that sounds interesting. You might find some coincidental similarities to songs you've learned before. I hope you will gain a little more musical awareness through this less conventional experience.

I have a question for you? When you played each "progression" did you find yourself changing the way you accented your strumming? Is an experience as valid as a lesson? Did you find yourself deviating from the number of beats-per-chord, different than I suggested? Now keep your guitar out and see where it takes you…

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Flatpick Rhythm Guitar

by Joe Carr

New Chords for an Old Standard

Chord expansion or substitution is a technique used to "spice up" simple chord progressions. "The Tennessee Waltz" is a great standard with a beautiful melody. It can be played with only four chords as indicated here:

A: 1 1 1 4 1 1 5 5 1 1 1 4 1 5 1 1
B: 1 3 4 1 1 1 5 5 1 1 1 4 1 5 1 1

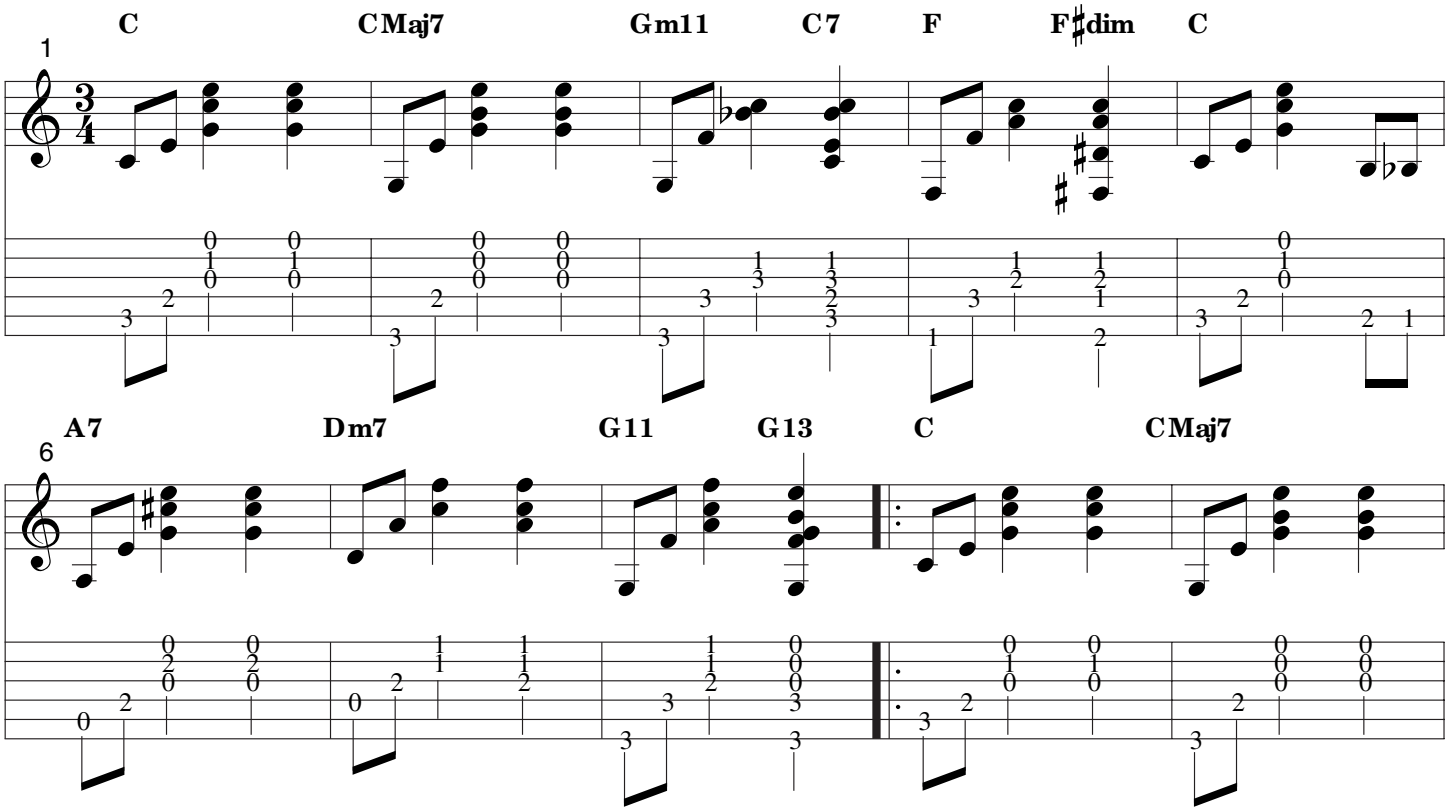
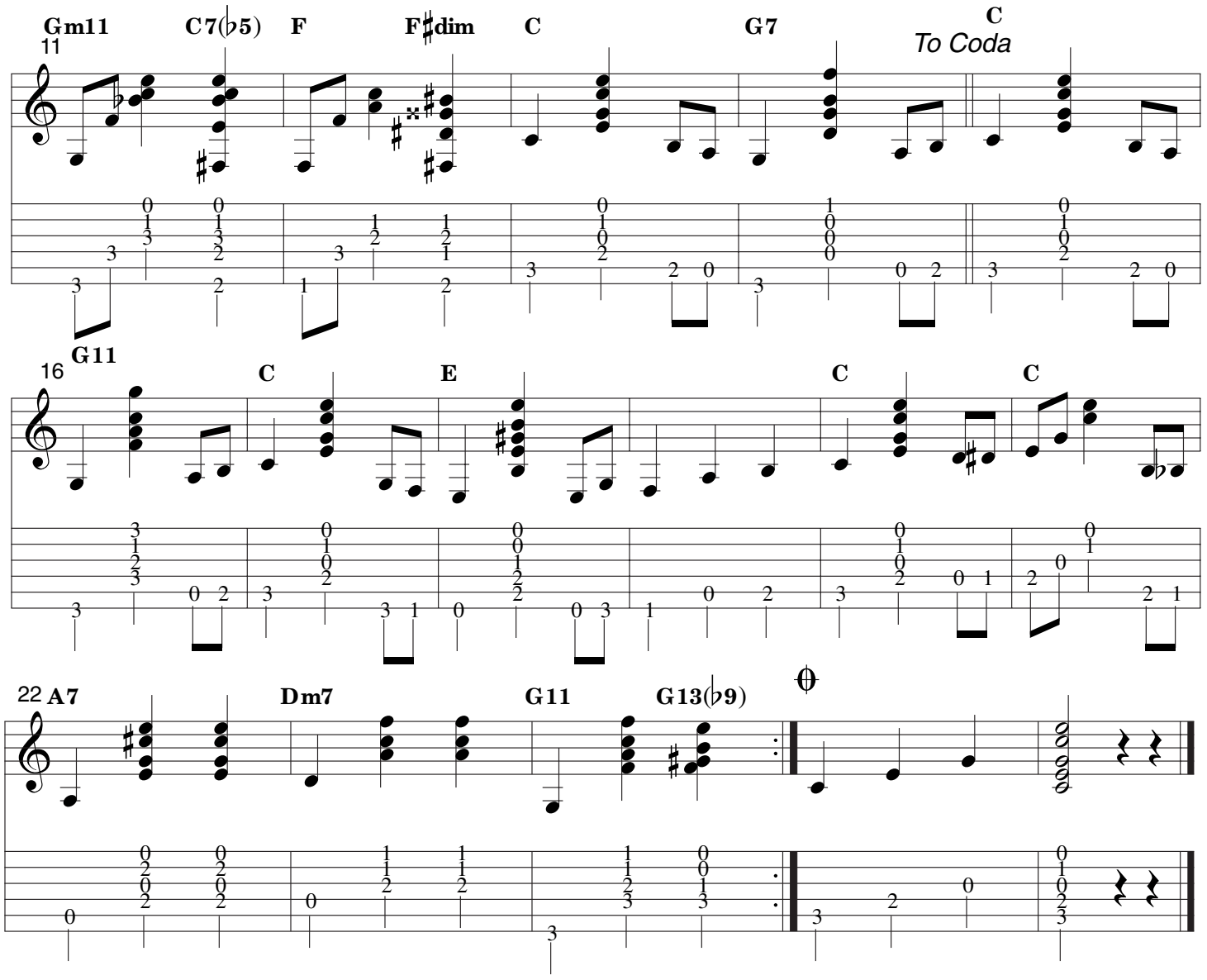
The arrangement below introduces many substituted chords using several rules. These substitutions can be applied to nearly any song with similar chord situations. This time, I'll just explain each new chord briefly. If you want more explanation of substitutions, let me know at jcarr@spc.cc.tx.us and I'll make it the subject of future columns.

Sub #1, measure 2: Cmaj7 is a major chord so it can be directly substituted for C major. One rule says, "Chords of the same type can be substituted for each other." Majors for majors, minors for minors, dominants for dominants, etc. This is called "direct substitution."
Sub #2, measure 3: C7 is a dominant chord. One rule says, "For any dominant chord, substitute a minor chord built on the 5th of the dominant." The 5th of C is G. Gm11 is a direct substitution for Gm.
Sub #3, measure 4: F#dim is a "connector" in the 4 – 1 or F to C chord situation.
Sub #4, measure 7: Dm7 is the substitute for G7. See Sub #2.
Sub #5, measure 8: G11 and G13 are direct substitutions for G7.
Sub #6, measure 10: See Sub # 1.
Sub # 7, measure 11: See Sub #2. C7b5 is a direct substitution for C7.
Sub #8, measure 12: See Sub #3
Sub #9, measure 16: G11 is a direct substitution for G7.
Sub #10, measure 24: G11 and G13b9 are direct substitutions for G7.

Once you are used to the sound of these substitutions, try them out in some familiar songs. You may discover, "Hey, that's what Tony Rice is doing on 'Georgia'!" I use many of the ideas in this arrangement on my recording of "Tennessee Waltz" with Alan Munde. (*Welcome to West Texas* – FF669).

Tennessee Waltz Rhythm Example with Chord Substitutions

Arranged by Joe Carr



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Winfield 2001

by Dan Miller

2001 National Flatpicking Guitar Champion Adam Wright (right) gets rhythm support from his friend and former teacher Rob Pearcy

The 30th annual Walnut Valley Festival at Winfield, Kansas, held 13-16 September of this year, will be the one music event that most prominently sticks out in the minds of all who attended. It was during this week that our country fell under terrorist attack. On Tuesday, September 11th, many of the festival attendees were already on-site, and had been there for several days. The campground traditionally opens a full week before the music event begins and many individuals begin to line up days, and even weeks, before that.

The Tuesday before the Walnut Valley Festival begins is traditionally a day of visiting with friends and family to enjoy their company and campground jamming. The air is usually filled with the excitement and anticipation of another great year at Winfield. However, on that Tuesday of this year not many people felt like bringing out their instruments. The general mood was one of shock, disbelief, reflection, grief, and anger.

By the next day, however, at the urging of New York City's mayor and our President, the campers were determined to not let the terrorists change our way of life. The hearts and minds of the attendees were still with the victims of this tragedy and their families, however, the group at Winfield began to express their thoughts and emotions as they do best—through music and song. American flags—and red, white, and blue ribbons, shirts, and banners—were displayed and worn proudly throughout the remainder of the event. Songs on-stage were dedicated to the victims and rescue workers and all attendees observed a silent prayer with the rest of the nation.

Many of the Walnut Valley festival's attendees return year after year. Some families plan their family reunions around this event and many others feel as though their Winfield friends are as much a part of their extended family as are their blood relations. There is always a spirit of "coming home" that surrounds the Walnut Valley Festival. This year those ties and bonds were further strengthened as the festival attendees lent each other support during a national crisis. As one attendee said, "There is no other place that I would rather be during this crisis than Winfield. These people are my family."

Due to the restricted air travel, many of the acts that were booked to play at this year's event were not able to get to Winfield. The acts that did make it worked overtime to fill in the gaps. *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* columnist Chris Jones was not scheduled to appear this year, however, he was on-site to pick up the Night Drivers' fiddle player Casey Driessen, who was performing with Mark Schatz and Friends, as the Night Drivers had a show in Missouri on Saturday.

Chris volunteered to help out on Thursday and Friday. He participated in the guitar and songwriting workshops and gave four stage performances, teaming up with Casey, Jim Hurst, and Missy Raines. Jim and Missy also gave several unscheduled duo sets. Although acts like Tommy Emmanuel, Nickle Creek, and Laurie Lewis, were definitely missed, the crowd was in no way disappointed by those performers and bands who stepped up to fill in for those who could not make it to Winfield this year.

The big event at the Walnut Valley Festival for us flatpickers is, of course, the National Flatpicking Championships. Despite the tragedy facing our nation, the competition went off without a hitch. This event is synonymous with "extremely tough competition," and although a few of the competitors could not make the trip this year, I would not say that the competition was any less fierce than it has been in previous years. Several former champions were in the line up as well as many who had placed second or third in years past.

Everyone who participated in the event played well in the preliminary rounds. There were at least ten of the competitors who played well enough to make it to the final round. However, the judges can only pick five. When those names were announced, they were as follows: Scott

Fore of Radford, Virginia (2nd place in 2000); Steve Lewis of Todd, North Carolina (3rd place in 1999); Lincoln Meyers of New Market, New Hampshire; Adam Wright of Whitehouse, Tennessee; and Matt Lindsey of Dunbar, West Virginia (2nd place in 1992 and a top-five finalist in 2000).

After each of the finalist played two more tunes in the final round, the judges tabulated their scores and the top three places were announced in reverse order. Third place went to Matt Lindsey, second place to Steve Lewis, and first place to Adam Wright. Adam selected a Collings D2H guitar for his prize and was also given a check for $3000 along with his winner's trophy. Steve Lewis (who also placed second in the banjo contest this year) selected a Martin D-28 as his prize, and Matt Lindsey took home a Taylor guitar.

Adam Wright, who was featured in Volume 4, Number 5 of *Flatpicking Guitar*, performed in the contest on the Henderson guitar that he won in the 2000 Wayne Henderson Festival contest. In the preliminaries he played "Golden Eagle Hornpipe" and "Bill Cheathum." In the finals Adam played "Lonesome Fiddle Blues" and "Wild Fiddler's Rag." Rob Pearcy, who placed second in this year's mandolin contest, provided Adam with rhythm accompaniment during the competition.

After being announced the contest champion, Adam was invited to come out and play another tune for the audience. This time Adam brought out his new Nashville Guitar Company guitar which he helped build at Marty Lanham's shop in Nashville. The last time we featured Adam in the magazine he was working for Gibson, he has since left that job and is now working for Marty Lanham. Adam is also working on a new CD which he hopes to complete by Christmas.

Although this is a very tough contest to call, every one of the contestants and spectators who I talked to felt like Adam Wright was deserving of the championship. Although many of the contestants said, "I wish I had of played better" after having their time on stage, the feeling of camaraderie among the contestants is such that they are all happy for those who take home prizes. As Jim Baggett of Mass Street Music said when presenting the guitars to the winners, "All of these contestants back stage are rooting for each other. They are all good friends." Such is the spirit of Winfield— especially this year.

Congratulations Adam Wright!

Steve Lewis (left) of Todd, North Carolina was the runner-up at this year's competition

Matt Lindsey (right) of Dunbar, West Virginia, finished in third place

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Guitar Maintenance and Repair

by Frank Ford

A synthetic mid-life crisis?

The Aging of Plastic Guitar Components

About 30 years ago my friend Boyd inherited a really cool guitar from his grandmother. A prewar (World War One, that is) Martin 00-42, it was made with no synthetic materials at all. It was assembled with animal hide glue, and finished with natural shellac. It was decorated with wood and abalone purfling; the binding, bridge and original inlaid pickguard were made of real elephant ivory. Even then (about 1910) Martin was just about the only factory (not counting the violin family instrument makers) using all natural materials for stringed instruments. Celluloid binding had entered the fretted instrument world nearly a generation earlier, so Washburn and Gibson, among others, used that material as binding from the very beginning of their production.

Natural materials such as ivory and tortoise are not only rare and expensive, but they are also difficult to handle in a production setting. It's only reasonable that instrument factories turned to modern synthetics as soon as they became practical and available. Spray finishing replaced shellac French polishing, and celluloid replaced a variety of natural materials in the first decades of the last century. Now, we're seeing modern plastics such as PVC and complex catalyzed polymer finishes replacing those "traditional synthetics." Sometimes it's a matter of facilitating production, and sometimes an attempt to improve durability.

So what's wrong with all that? Nothing, really, except when the instrument starts getting "middle aged." The early celloloids and lacquers have volatile components that escape, causing brittleness and shrinkage. Modern materials may have unknown longevity as well. . .

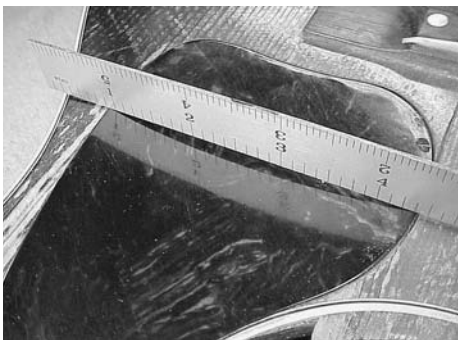
Now, I suppose it would be "good business" if all guitars self-destructed after as short a time as possible. Then the factory could sell you another one! No guitar factory purposely builds in this kind of obsolescence, but none makes an all-natural instrument for the specific purpose of lasting many generations. And because the sound improves with the age of the instrument, we players have every intention of keeping our guitars in service for as long as possible, sometimes even investing more in restoration than the cost of a new replacement guitar.

OK, enough preamble ramble. This time I want to discuss plastic components and how they age and die. In my last article, I showed a technique for regluing traditional Martin pickguards. Now, let's take a closer look at celluloid and other plastic. Then, next time I'll bring out some standard plastic repairs.

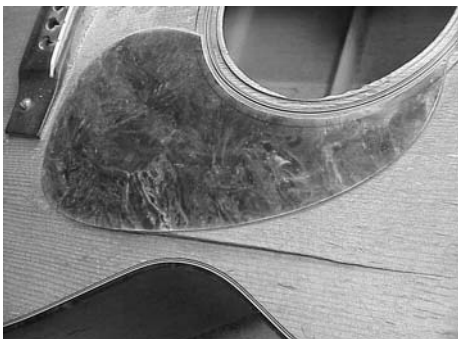
First, a bit more on pickguards. Celluloid plastic pickguards became standard equipment on Martin guitars along about 1930, having been used by many other manufacturers a generation earlier. Adhered to the guitar top with solvent glue, the pickguard was finished over at the same time as the rest of the guitar body. But, unlike the wooden parts of the guitar, this plastic has volatile chemical components that evaporate over time, causing it to shrink. Most of us have seen the result of this shrinkage, which can be accelerated by exposure to heat:

The pickguard can curl up like a potato chip, and peel away from the top of the guitar.

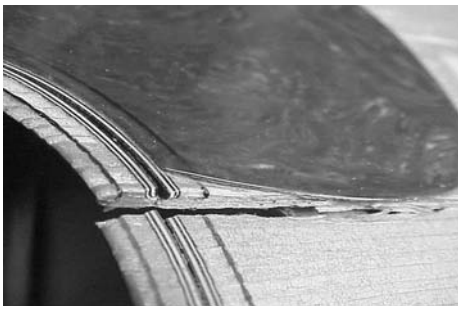
The pickguard often is so powerfully glued to the top that it bends the top downward as it shrinks:



A shrinking pickguard can crack the top, sometimes seriously enough to endanger the life of the guitar:



Eventually, the pickguard can pull the top away from the bracing underneath, causing a structural failure:



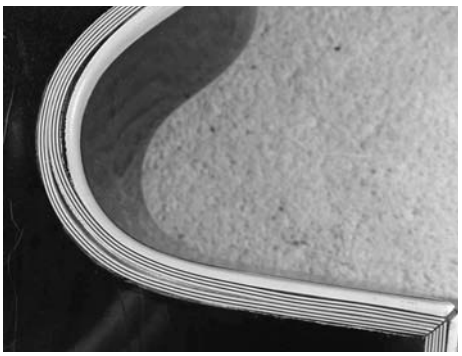
As I showed last time, by releasing and regluing the guard, I'm able to decrease the effects of that shrinkage tension on the guitar top. I can't do a thing about the plastic shrinkage in the future. All I'm doing is setting the clock back so the process can begin again.

Even though it may seem like a cost cutting measure, I think the modern self-adhesive plastic pickguard makes more sense. I suspect these pickguards will have shorter effective lives, as they tend to curl away from the guitar top, but they are easy to replace. You simply peel off the old pickguard and stick on a new one. It's a modern solution to a modern problem.

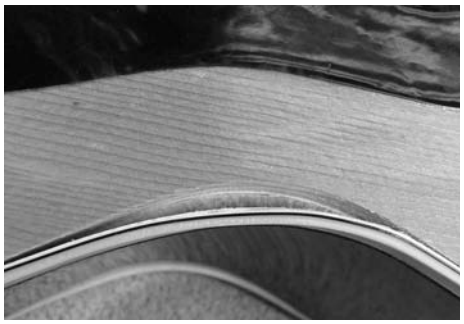
As a celluloid pickguard ages, it may also affect the finish and other parts of an instrument:

Just look at the intense rust and corrosion on the string and pickup of this archtop jazz guitar. Those are some corrosive fumes!

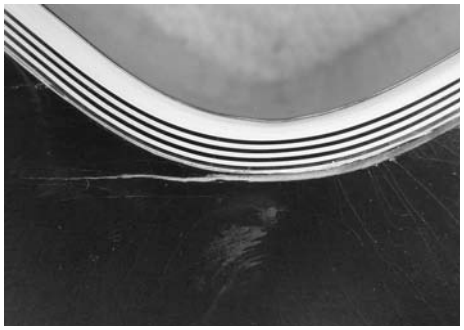
Plastic binding shrinks, too. Here, the heavy laminated plastic binding has pulled apart in the cutaway area of a guitar back: The various layers have broken apart, and the binding has separated at the corner joint.



The binding on this Guild guitar has shrunk so much that it has pulled away completely at the waist:

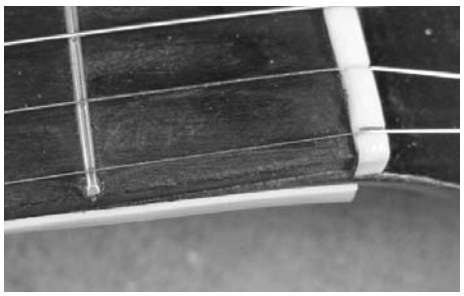


Shrinking binding can cause structural damage just as a pickguard can. If the glue joint doesn't break, then the wood will:



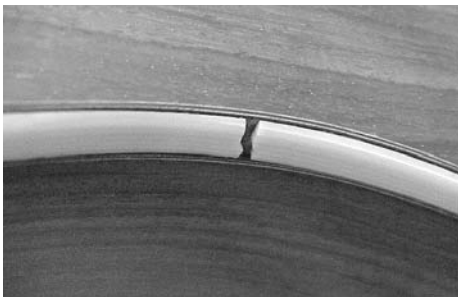
As the binding pulls even tighter at the waist, it eventually tears the side loose and cracks the top or back.

This is probably the most common binding looseness, caused by shrinkage, accelerated by the warmth of the player's hand:



An easy repair in this case. The binding can be reglued without disturbing much of the instrument: Oops! It's a little short now, though.

Simply regluing the banding at the waist section can result in this little surprise:

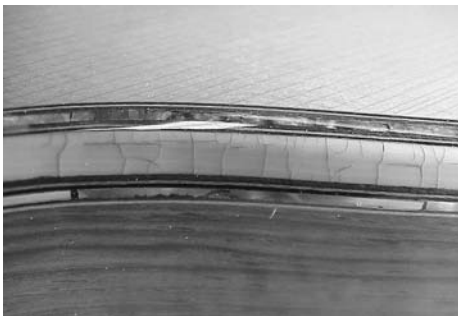


Next time, I'll be discussing some of the techniques I use to reglue loose binding.

As the plastic continues to deteriorate over time, there's eventually a point of no return:

Here, the binding has decayed so completely, that nobody would consider trying to repair it. The only solution to this problem is complete replacement of the binding, a monumental effort indeed. Now's a good time to consider refinishing this particular guitar. Replacing the binding without injuring the finish is terribly time consuming, and if there are other reasons to refinish, this is the time to do it.

Speaking of refinishing, take a look a this bit of binding:



One of the little discussed ills of refinishing is the effect that the new lacquer has on old celluloid. The new lacquer solvents appear to leach out the celluloid plasticizes at an accelerate rate. The cracks in the binding of this 1929 Martin 00-45 extend all the way through the binding, and all over the instrument. They appeared about a decade after the refinishing. Personally, I've only seen this kind of binding

deterioration on Martin instruments which have been refinished with lacquer. Now, this poor old guitar needs all new binding!

The same thing happens to pickguards, too:

Again, I've only seen this on refinished instruments.

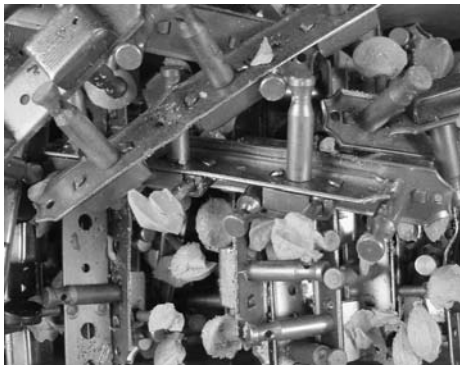
I know positively what happened to the binding on the point of this mandolin:

I installed the binding myself as I was building the instrument. To form the thick pieces at the points, I "welded" three thicknesses of the celluloid binding material using acetone as a solvent. Now, 29 years later, the deterioration of the points is complete, while the rest of the binding is in perfect shape. I'll take that as proof positive of the long term effects of solvent on celluloid.

Another example of total deterioration:

Fortunately, a bridge pin is not a serious loss! Just get a new one, and you're in business.

Here's a box of "new old stock" Kluson tuners from the 1950s:

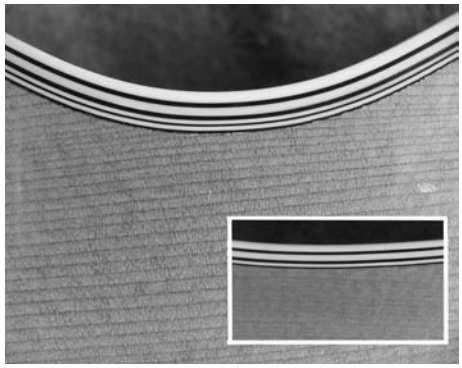


Their plastic buttons have basically all rotted off. Again, it's not a matter of being able to "save" the plastic bits. All you can do is install new buttons.

Plastic decomposition isn't just for acoustic guitars. . .

This one was made in 1994, and is in great shape now: Anybody want to guess how long before there's real trouble?

As I was putting this article together, I ran across a photo I thought you'd enjoy seeing. It's a bit off topic, but it is an interesting bit of Martin trivia. This is the waist section of a 1960s 000-28, and if you look closely you'll see that there are two extra lines of purfling. The little inset is the standard "28" pattern: When the purfling channel was routed, there was probably a little chip or slip of the tool. So, instead of sending out second rate work, or scrapping a perfectly good guitar top, they simply took a slightly deeper cut and added an extra black/white layer of purfling. If you look at enough Martin instruments you'll see an occasional example of this little anomaly. I'm better at spotting this kind of thing than a shooting star or a whale spouting off in the distance. . .



Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock

by John Tindel

Well, here we are at the end of another music-filled summer/fall season. Hopefully you've all had opportunities galore to see, hear, and be inspired by the truly amazing variety of talent that seems to be out there these days. But now that winter's setting in, it's time to settle in to a bit of practicing, right?

This time out I've got a nice little descending exercise/melody using hammer-ons and pull-offs, in three keys that are less commonly used in flatpicking: E, D and A. The chord accompaniment progression is a bit similar to "Blackberry Blossom" and indeed the lead part can be inserted into that song as a variation on a theme if wanted.

The chords for the rhythm part are:

Part 1: E B C#m G#m A E A B, E B C#m G#m A E B E

Part 2: D A Bm F#m G D G A, D A Bm F#m G D G A D

Part 3: A E F#m C#m D A D E, A E F#m C#m D A E A

If you have a partner who can play these for you or a way to record the rhythm part yourself and play over it, try picking it with a single downstroke across the lower (the fat ones) strings, on each chord, followed immediately by three upstrokes corresponding to the top three strings (the skinny ones). At the same time, partially mute the strings at the bridge with the butt of your picking hand for that rhythmic, percussive kind of effect.

The lead part comes sailing in over that, starting with the 13th fret on the G string and the 12th fret on the E and B strings. Use your second finger to fret the G# on the 13th fret and hammer off with your first finger on the E on the 12th fret to the open E an octave lower. Then upstroke on the open B string. While that's ringing, slide the second finger down the G string to the 11th fret while hammering off the 11th fret high string (D#) with the third finger once again to the open E and B string, following on down the neck. (See tab.)

The second part is essentially the same progression except in D. The same for the third part, except it's in A.

This is a fun one to pass around a jam circle because it moves through 3 different key signatures that one can improve on. See how many hammer-on, pull-off variations you can find within the context of the chord changes—syncopate the open high strings by using triplet figures or use a dotted 1/8th note feel. Have fun, and remember to let those open strings ring out to maximize those nice passing tones.

A note to those of you that have the audio CD for this issue, I'm playing a baby Taylor this time—try one, they're fun!

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Descending Exercise:

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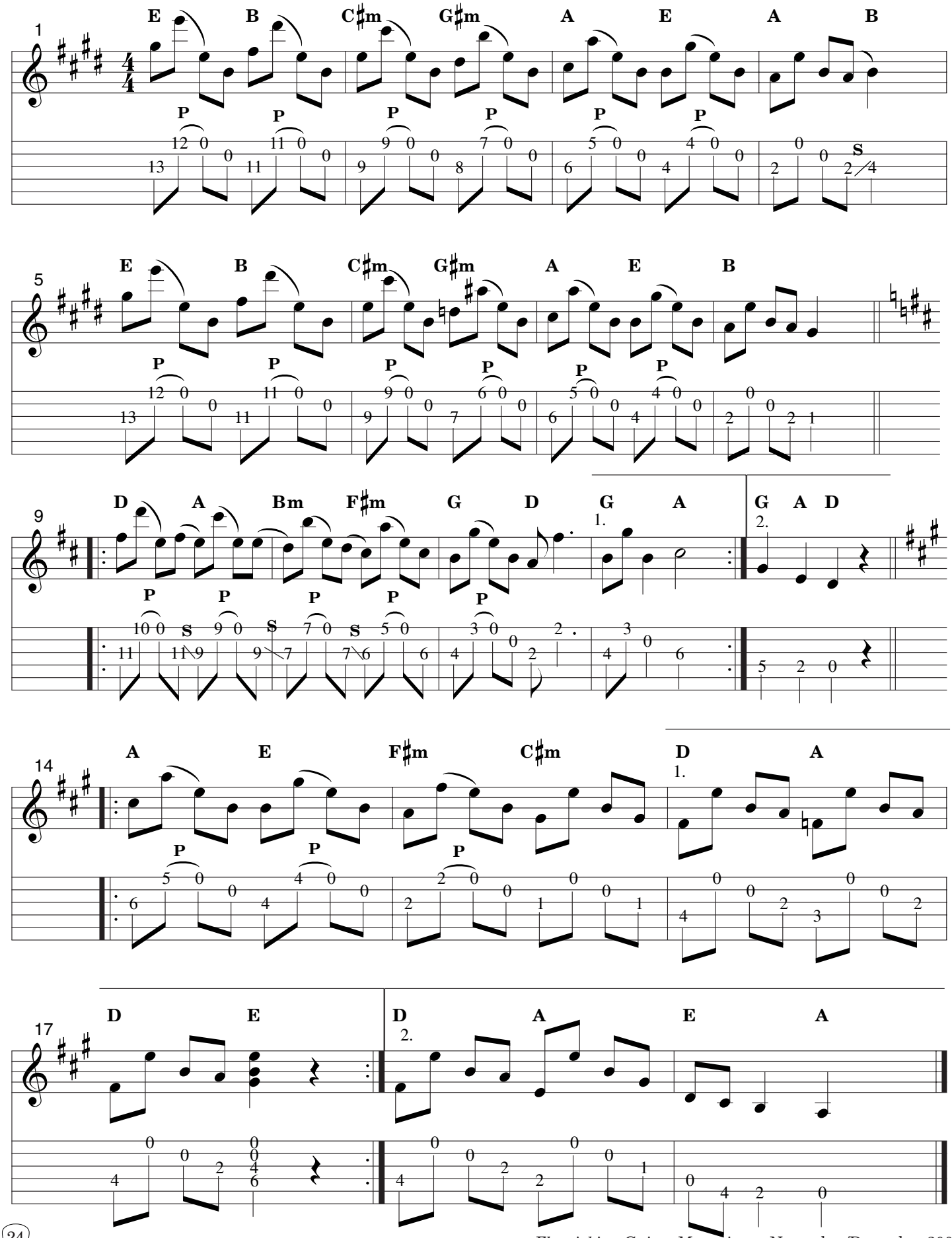
Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

The First Noel

Happy Holidays Folks. I hope this holiday season finds you all resting with family members and having a great holiday. I chose this tune for obvious reasons but the arrangement came about from people's suggestions in my worldwide workshops asking for double-stop work. This entire arrangement lays out in double-stops on the 2nd and 3rd strings only.

Use the fingerings that are marked and try to make the notes ring long enough to overlap to the next note. This way you are sure to give the note full time value. They should ring like open strings. The muscles of the left arm that are used are actually the biceps. They won't get real tight but you may feel a little pulling in your upper arm as you try to sustain the notes.

I also have another version to this song for beginner and intermediate players in my *Smokey Mountain Christmas* book for guitar (and mandolin) with all the words included. Give me a call and I'll ship one out to you.

Have fun with this one and try to break down what you are doing in this arrangement.

Happy Holidays and Bye for now –

Steve K

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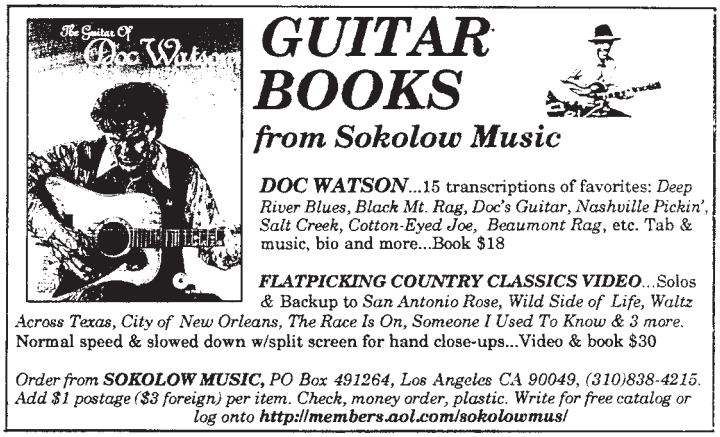
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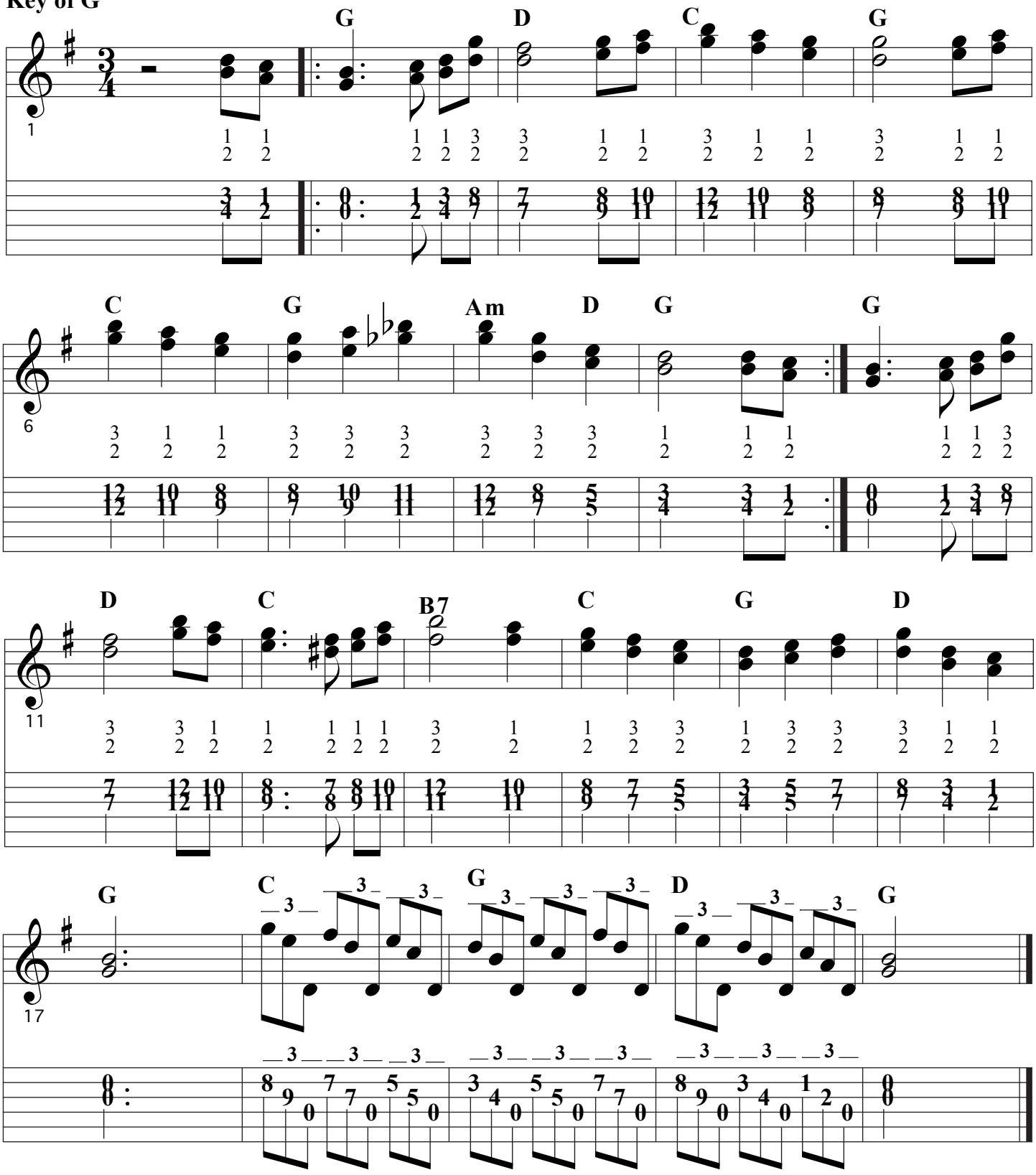
The First Noel

Arr by Steve Kaufman

The next step after my Smokey Mountain Christmas Book

Key of G

Adventures in Acoustic Music:
Silent Night

by John Carlini

This month you can call me "nostalgic." The holidays are a special time. Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, or another significant day, the feeling is the same: good will, gift giving, gatherings, parties, family, and a subject very close to all of our hearts—food! Sure, we're living in a time funnel. It gets crazier every year. But you can capture the essence, if it's important to you.

Part of what makes the holidays special is the music that goes with the season. Every year out it comes. If you're a professional musician you'd better have about 20 or 30 seasonal tunes ready to go! You start playing them on "gigs" after Thanksgiving and they continue through the first week of January!

Christmas music is in a class by itself. The melodies and harmonies of the carols and songs are instantly associated with the season. And they produce that "feeling" in us—well, a lot of us anyway! Of course, it goes back to childhood. My feeling is that we learned to celebrate Christmas and the holidays by reading Dickens!

But it's time to get specific. For many people the one piece of music that defines the season is, "Silent Night."

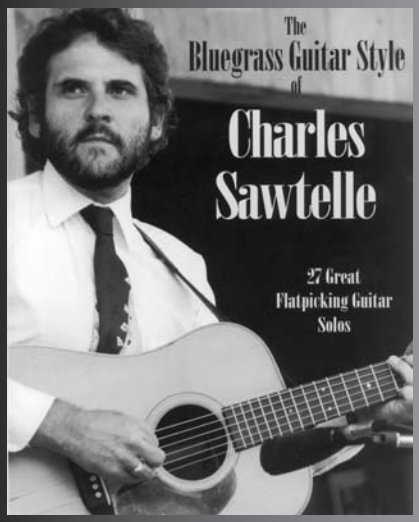
"Silent Night" was first performed about 180 years ago during a midnight service on Christmas Eve at a village church in Oberndorf, Austria. The composer was choir director, Franz Gruber. It will interest readers of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* to know that the original accompaniment was not the organ. It was the guitar!

Years afterward there was some controversy over the composition. Many assumed it was written by Haydn, Mozart, or Beethoven. Only recently an original manuscript was discovered which had Gruber's name listed as composer. Franz Gruber was not known outside his village. There was no celebrated world premiere of the work. Yet it is sung and performed by untold millions each year.

Regarding this arrangement: after experimenting with various keys, styles, major 9 chords, moving inner lines, and so on, I decided to maintain the beauty and simplicity of the song. So it's just melody with chords at the expected places. The E7 at bar 6 takes a bit of practice. If you barre the 2nd fret with the index finger it "unfolds" smoothly. Bars 9 and 10 are repeated in bars 11 and 12. Take a look at bar 10. The melody contains a perfect example of the characteristic note of the Lydian mode, G# (#4). The Lydian mode is a major scale with a raised 4th step and is a beautiful sound. In bar 10 the bass is moving in harmony with the melody at the interval of a diatonic 10th. (Diatonic notes are notes that are contained in the scale of the key signature, in this case "A".) In bars 17 and 18 the chords are all E7's. Place your index finger on the 5th string, 7th fret in bar 17, and leave it there when you get to bar 18. It ends with one of my favorite "A" chords. It's called A/E because it is an A chord with E in the bass.

I hope you enjoy this beautiful carol, and I wish you and yours a fantastic holiday season.

Bon Natale!



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Silent Night

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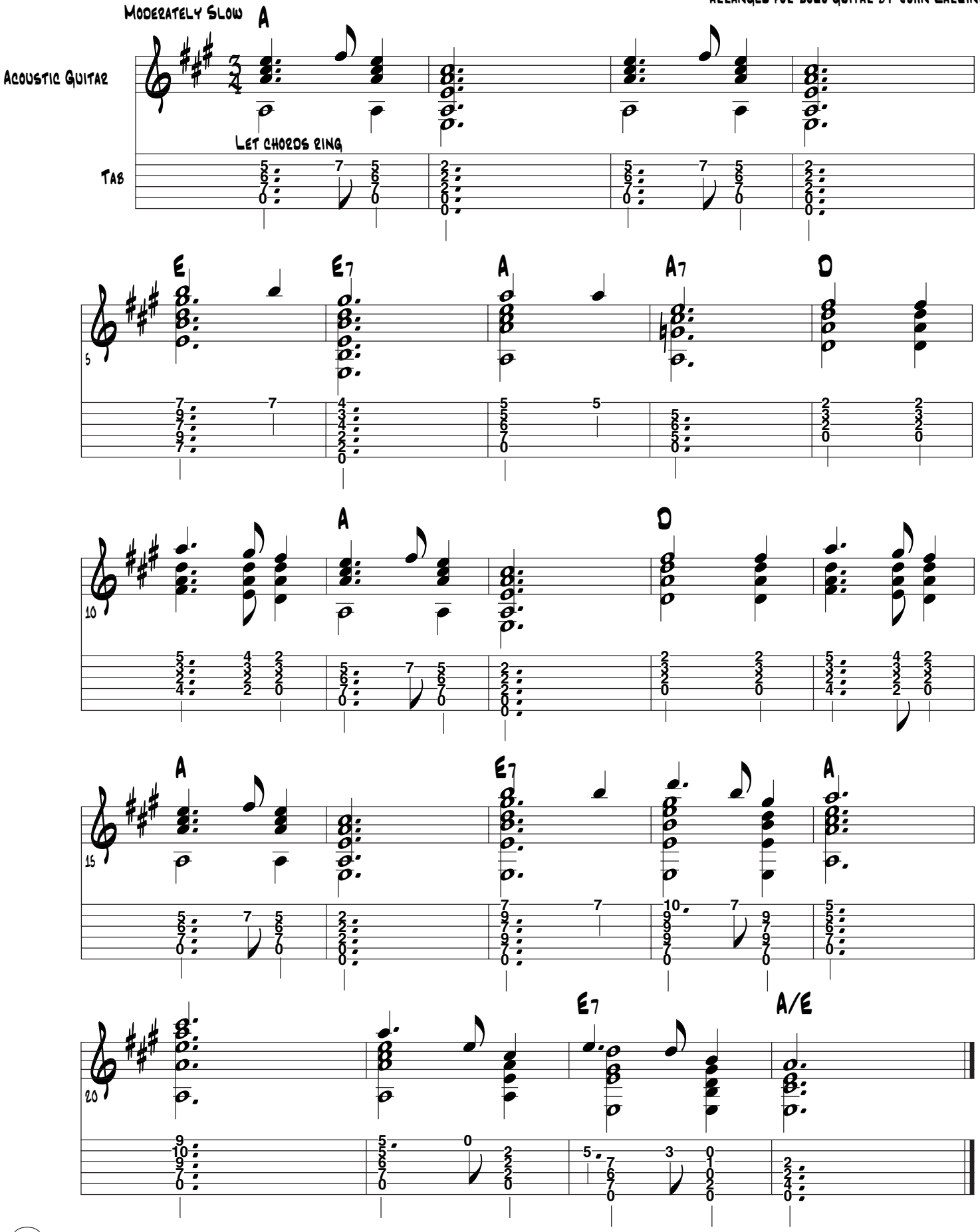
Arranged for solo guitar by John Carlini

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Marcy Marxer

by Skip Staples

Marcy Marxer's talent covers the entire musical spectrum. She is a world-famous guitarist, performer, singer, songwriter, producer (recordings, theatrical events and television), and an inspiring instructor. She uses her mastery of traditional music to expand her repertoire into creative and inspiring combinations and mixtures, as well as to write new songs in old styles. Marcy and her partner Cathy Fink have received several Grammy nominations and numerous other awards for their music. In fact, during this interview, Marcy and Cathy received an invitation to The White House in recognition for their accomplishments. Extremely talented, she is an artist in the truest sense of the word, and is a very gracious lady.

Have music and the guitar always been a big part of your life?

I started playing when I was about 5. My aunt Bess lived across the street and she played nothing but country gospel and my grandmother played barrelhouse blues and honky-tonk. My great-grandmother was an old-time fiddler who worked between Detroit and Chicago. My Mom and two of her sisters had a jazz trio that worked around Detroit when they were younger. I grew up playing with them, even some of the same songs but in a totally different way. It was a great way to learn and was extra special playing with my relatives. It was a really wonderful experience for me. I love the sound of bluegrass, but I can't ignore the fact that I've played swing and jazz since I was a little kid. It was all I ever did. Every Friday night there was a bluegrass jam at a music store in Flint and every once in a while there would be a street festival. A lot of Appalachian folks had moved up there to work in the automobile factories, so this music was very popular there at that time.

You must have been very brave to decide to become a professional guitar player. How did that come about?

I'm not sure if it was bravery or stupidity [laughs]. I never really knew that people played music for a living. It never occurred to me to be a professional folk musician because I didn't know there was such a thing. I used to wake up in the morning and just play the guitar for 12 hours every day. Then I realized that I should start playing some gigs or I was just going to be broke all the time. It wasn't like a burning desire to perform as much as because people wouldn't pay me to stay home and play [laughs].

I went to acting school at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in Los Angeles. I played guitar and sang in a talent show at the end of the first year. The next day, the school's director called me into his office and said, "We think you might be in the wrong profession." He suggested that I pursue a career in music because it offered more artistic freedom to me than acting would offer. He said that since I looked like such a baby at that time, that I would only get to play young kids until I was in my mid-30's or so. He was wrong. People thought I was a kid until I was 40 (laughs). I thought he was crazy at first, but then I went to a folk festival for the first time. After that, I was hooked. I did some gigs on my own, and then started playing with The Bosom Buddies and played with them for a while.

But turning professional was really an accident. An amazing Canadian singer and songwriter named Stan Rogers was doing a show in Lansing and my band was playing in a bar there. After his gig, people brought him to the bar to have a kick-back drink and see the local culture. He heard us and, without us knowing about it, went back home and booked us all across Canada at the festivals. So we did every major festival that summer of 1980. Then the festivals in the United States saw that we were at all the Canadian festivals, so they booked us, too. And I've done it ever since. So, I turned pro not out of knowledge of how to do it, but really due to the kindness of Stan Rogers. After that, mostly I just answered the telephone and said yes.

Cathy and I met at the Mariposa Festival in Toronto in 1980 while I was playing with The Bosom Buddies. She was previously in a bluegrass band, but they had broken up and she was playing at the festival as a solo for the first time. We were in some workshops together and we really hit it off. We booked Cathy a tour in Michigan and, in exchange, Cathy booked us a tour around the D.C. area. As a result of this booking exchange, we got to be really good friends. When Bosom Buddies subsequently broke

up, I was asked to do a few school programs featuring music for special education students. I didn't know it, but Cathy was doing some school programs in Canada at the same time. Then Sugar Hill Records brought us together on a recording project that turned out to be Blue Rose with Laurie Lewis, Molly Mason, and Sally Van Meter. Afterwards, Cathy and I played in the folk and bluegrass scene for many years and we still do, especially overseas, but the kids' stuff has really taken off.

You and Cathy have released several successful children's projects. What's it like performing for kids?

When we started it, so many people said to me, "What are you doing working with kids? Are you giving up?" No, we're not giving up. This is important. Now it's looked at differently, but at that time it wasn't the thing for a professional to do. In fact, a few years ago, the same people who used to ask us why we did it, started calling us to see if we thought they could make kid's records, too (laughs). My response to them is this: If you want to be good at playing for kids, take your music to a hospital, specifically into wards where the kids are very ill. There's nobody in the world who deserves entertainment any more than these kids. If you can go in there and hold their attention for a minimum of 20 minutes, you're good. But if you can't, it's like being thrown to the wolves. A single kids' concert takes as much effort as an entire day of festivals and workshops for me. We're whipped by the end of it, but it's really great and really rewarding.

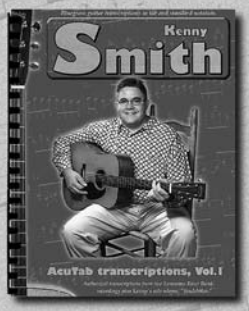
How did you become proficient in so many different styles?

That's tricky because mainly I learn things when I need to know them. I'm the kind of musician who says yes to every gig, or I did for years so it didn't matter what it was. So when I needed some theory, I just learned what I needed to know and when I needed some more chords, I learned what I needed. It's been pretty gradual. Basically, you just try to color with all the crayons.

I've played electric for a long time, but I grew up playing acoustic and it never crossed my mind to play electric. Then I started working for Patsy Montana in 1980. I was playing acoustic with her for the first couple of years. I wanted to improve and Patsy wanted me to improve [laughs]. She was wonderful to work with and she knew so many songs that there was no way we could practice and get ready for the gigs. We just had to learn the whole genre if we could. She would sing a song that she knew I'd never heard before, then throw me a break and just watch me sink or swim. I loved the fact that she was game for anything. If it was a break I was working really hard on, she'd say something into the microphone to get me to crack up since I wasn't cracking up on my own. The audience would just bust up laughing. There were times when I had to turn my back to the audience because I was laughing so hard, too. There are worse gigs to have than when you're having total fun like that. Patsy was remarkable. She was great!

Finally, Patsy played me a record and said, "This is what I really want you to sound like." It was pretty straightforward and I said, "Oh, it's electric. It's an archtop electric." And she said, "Yeah." I played electric with Patsy for so long, but I'm still an acoustic guitar player. The thing I like more than anything is the sound of an acoustic guitar.

Acutab Guitar



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How difficult is being a female in a predominately male environment? What other problems of this nature have you seen?

You know, it's been pretty great. It hasn't been a disadvantage for me at all. Guitar-playing overall, and not just flatpicking, tends to be thought of as a man's world. My only negative experiences were with people who were non-professionals, somewhat with promoters. They sometimes thought that if they had a band with girls in it, they had done their part. I've actually overheard promoters say, "Well, we got a band with a girl in it, so we've done that and we're real proud of ourselves." But it's mainly the gigs where I find that there isn't a lot of room. It's not the audience ever, and it's never the musicians. It seems like the better the musician, the less problem there is with sexism. If there's a problem, it lies with the promotors.

But problems happen in other ways, too. There are people in bluegrass and who do nothing but bluegrass and do it amazingly well, who are still struggling. One difficulty with the bluegrass scene is there are some acts who get all the money and all the other acts get a little bit of money. This is not the way to support your artists. Sure, there are bigger names and lesser names, but part of the problem is where they are programmed at the festival. If you take somebody like the Lynn Morris Band and you put them on in a real good evening slot, the audience is going to go nuts because they're fabulous. There are so many bands and so many players who are really having a hard time making it and I think it's because of the hierarchy of the scene and not because of lack of quality. Once the promoters peg you in a certain place, that's where you're going to be until somebody else moves on.

We know you advise that rhythm is very important. What can you tell us about rhythm and especially swing?

Right hand is so important. It almost doesn't matter what your left hand does if your right hand is really solid. If your left hand just plays a simple G-chord but your right hand is perfect, it's going to sound great. And if your left hand is moving all over the place but your right hand doesn't hit the notes, then it doesn't really matter what your left hand is doing. It's not going to sound good.

I tend to use 3 and 4-note closed positions, sometimes 5-note, but almost never full barre chords. And that scares people because they think it's going to be physically hard to play. But if I can play them with these little munchkin hands on a big guitar, they can too. The trick is getting the chords that are close to each other so hand movements are not so large. [Marcy demonstrates a four-chord turnaround using G6 – G#dim - Amin7 – D9. See Chord Chart 1]. There's hardly any movement there. There are more complicated ways of playing those chords, but you don't really need to.

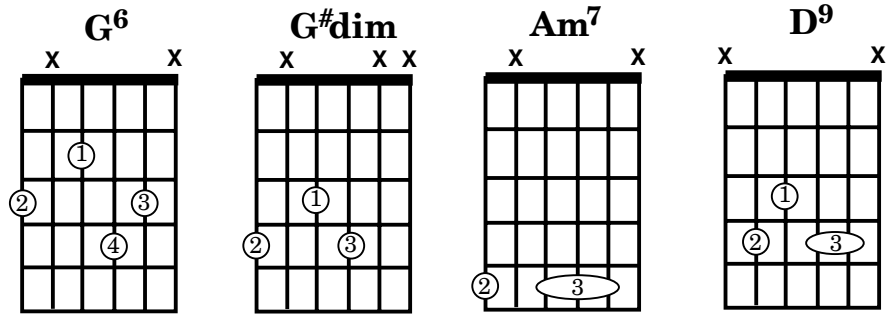
The swing comes from flicking your right hand. Tim O'Brien says it's like shaking out a dishtowel and it's very much like that. You just have a really loose wrist and just try to relax it. What you do is strum down and then strum down again harder. Just flick your right wrist and let the fingers of your left hand relax a little so that the strings are deadened. There's really not that much work happening on the left hand. If I have to work too much with the left hand, then I'll forget what I'm singing about [laughs]. You can vary the down strokes with some upstrokes, too, and deaden both of them.

But the cool thing is that with just those four chords, you can get lots of variations just by moving them down one fret and then back up where they belong. You can't do that with open chords without getting fired [laughs]. And still with the same four chords, just to spruce it up a little bit, you can slide into them, play them further up the neck, mix them up and, all of a sudden, it sounds like I know what I'm doing.

There are really two sets of chords to learn. First learn the chords with the bass note on the sixth string, then learn the same set of chords with the bass note on the fifth string. That way you can play in any key anytime, up and down the neck without using a capo. [Marcy demonstrates with another four-chord progression of C6 – C#dim – Dmin7 – G7. See Chord Chart 2]. There's more movement with this progression than the one in the key of G, so I suggest starting in G. That way you're ready when tunes change key in the middle of the song, which happens in swing music all the time. If you learn a couple of tunes in every key, whatever tune you're playing, just slide it around until you're familiar with it in every key. It sounds a lot harder than it is, but once you know it once, slide it around until you know it six times, then switch bass notes from sixth string to fifth, slide it around until you know it six more times, then you're up to twelve and there you go. You've got all the keys. Once you get it, it's there and you're always going to have it. It's like riding the bluegrass bicycle [laughs].

Playing music is communication. When you're playing chords, you need to listen to the soloist and be flexible. Whether

Chord Chart 1



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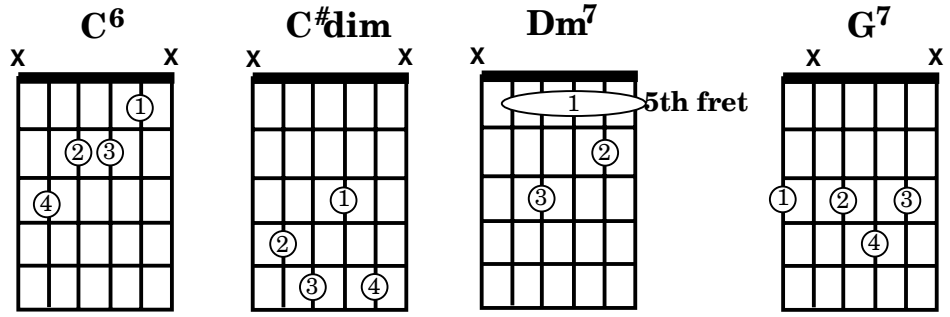

you're backing up a singer or backing up a soloist, what you play is really going to hinge on how they play, their whole approach. Sometimes swing fits really well and sometimes it doesn't fit well at all, even on the same tune with a different soloist or vocalist. You just have to be flexible. Whatever comes out of the soloists' brain, you have to be there and be ready. A lot of people do way too much when they're backing up somebody. I'd rather play one note if it makes the song more soulful than play a barrage of notes just because I can. I've heard many a rhythm player try to lead the lead player to where they want them to go, but that's not your job as a rhythm player at all.

As far as timing is concerned, keeping steady is crucial. One thing that I've done out of sheer interest rather than to help my guitar playing, is to play percussion. I've played congas in some theatrical productions in New York where they don't even know that I play the guitar. I've found after playing percussion that when I played the guitar, my sense of the rhythm seemed more solid. One of the problems with flatpicking is, in order to keep up, you sometimes have to play the tune as fast as you can. So people get in the habit of playing it as fast as they possibly can. As they get better and learn more, they're still playing as fast as they possibly can. Once they realize they have control of it, they can back up and make it sound exactly like they want it to or they can kick it.

I really don't see much difference between playing rhythm and lead other than the fact that the focus is different since with rhythm, you're listening and playing at the same time. When you're soloing, you may be listening to what's in your head instead of listening so closely to a vocalist or soloist. With rhythm, you're almost like a harmony singer, breathing at the same time, matching vibrato, and so on, and it takes you to a different level. You're really listening not only to the execution of the tune, but to every thought that person is having. I find I do better rhythm playing when I know the person I'm backing up. That's why I like to play in bands for a long time.

How do you develop your solo breaks?

Well, you always have to start with the melody. If I'm playing with a singer, I'll always try to play the singer's interpretation first. Then, I'll add embellishments and flesh it out from there. Usually, by then, you're done.

One way to get started soloing is to improvise a solo over a chord progression like the turnaround I mentioned earlier (G6 – G#dim – Amin7 – D9) and improvise a solo. There are ways to know what notes are going to work with that and what notes are not going to work with that. I suggest starting with just one note. There are only 12 notes so if you learn one note a day, in 12 days you pretty much have the whole guitar. Since we're in the key of G, pick a G-note and use rhythmic variations with just that one note. Play it straight on or slide into it. When you want to get fancier than that, play two notes, play the G and A notes, then add the G, A, and the B-flat. That's the third, fifth, and sixth frets on the first string, but you may as well learn the note names while you're there. Then drop down to the second string and play D, E, and F. They're also the third, fifth, and sixth frets, so it's the same pattern on both strings. So when you have two strings, you have the potential to play two notes at once. This gives you all this bluesy stuff which is the basis of some of Bill Monroe's playing. He took traditional tunes, added blues to them, and it exploded. It's all full of soul and emotion. It's wonderful.

Scales are fun to play, but when I'm playing a solo I never think of a scale. I think of the tune and sometimes I'm actually humming it in my head. Scales really make your hands work but I don't think about them when I'm playing. When I play, I think more of the chord shapes to show me where I am. The scale notes then just sort of flesh out the main notes in the chord. This helps me know what will work more so than scales. However, approaches can be different for different people and scales may work very well for some players. Whatever works for you is what's going to get it.

Who are the guitarists you listen to?

Poor Dan Crary. If he'd been around my house back when I was playing 12 hours a day, he would have been so sick of hearing his material. I just wore those albums out trying to hear all the nuances in Dan's playing.

Another flatpicking album from the 70s that just turned me right upside down was called *From A Northern Family* by Dudley Hill. It's an amazing album and he did things that no other guitar player was doing. I don't know where he is now but I hope he's still playing and I wish he'd record. It's unbelieveable.

One of the best nights of my life, musically, was listening to Norman Blake play rhythm at a jam session. It was the first time I'd heard him. I sat next to him and played lightly and listened to what he was doing in backing people up. He didn't take a lead break all night and it was just gorgeous, full and unique and thoughtful. I've been a fan of his ever since.

Listening to other instruments is good for me, but I love to hear the guitar more than anything. There's some good Mexican stuff out and tons of great Celtic stuff. Robin Bullock is amazing. Robin Kessinger and Wayne Henderson have been great influences over the past 15 years, too. And David Grier is one of my favorites, as is Russ Barenburg for tone.

You write quite a few songs, too. Any tips or suggestions on songwriting?

When I write, I try to completely avoid using any kind of formula. What I often do is take myself out of my normal situation and try to write something totally different and that helps me avoid the formulas. One thing that's hard to avoid as a songwriter is writing about yourself all the time. I mean, how far does that go? Tom Paxton, Si Kahn, and Bob Franke are really good at doing this.

Years ago, my guitar was stolen. All I ever did was play but, without my guitar, I had to think differently which ended up being a really good thing in the long run. Until my guitar was stolen I had never written a single thing. Once it was gone, it was like "What do I do now?" I started playing other instruments like the hammer dulcimer. Then I realized I could be a creative person even without a guitar. As long as you are on the earth, you can be a creative person. For people who have carpal tunnel or problems with their hands or there's some other reason that they can't play, just take another leap off the deep end. Try something else. But don't give up.

NASHVILLE FLATTOP

By Brad Davis

CREATING A SLOW SOLO

The idea of creating a slow solo has strong advantages. It can help in developing a smooth and confident right hand, train your brain to choose notes more carefully, and make you zero in on right and left hand technique that a faster pace would not allow. I have found that when asked to track (play) a solo very slow in the studio, that in most cases it takes more focus and control than when playing a fast and furious solo.

There is a difference between fast and slow coordination. Fast coordination lends itself to having a fast technique or comfortable fast picking position that is memorized and instantly utilized when picking fast. Slow coordination involves being able to slow way down, holding the grove without speeding up or rushing the beat, while choosing those perfect notes for the moment.

Most pickers try to use their fast comfortable postion for the slower solos. I see it all the time, pickers will rush the beat and sometimes crash because they can't seem to relax enough to slow down. The technique they use frequently is memorize for medium-to-fast solo picking.

So why create these slow solos? Slow, well performed solos can lead to great fast picking. If you can play it slow correctly (in the groove) then speeding up only involves the slight shifting of the right hand technique. For example: one might want to limit the third and forth finger posting on the top of the guitar to free the hand up when shifting to a faster tempo or one may want to lighten the picking intensity of the right hand on faster peices.

Slow solos can help build a solid technique and can give confidence and maturity to one's picking. Below I have tabbed out a slow solo on a random set of chords. Listen close to the attack and soul of each note. When playing slower you may want to keep in mind that sustain and slight vibrato play a big part in creating measureable amount of emotion in the solo. Have fun and good luck!

If you have any questions:
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Creating A Slow Solo

Key E. w drop D

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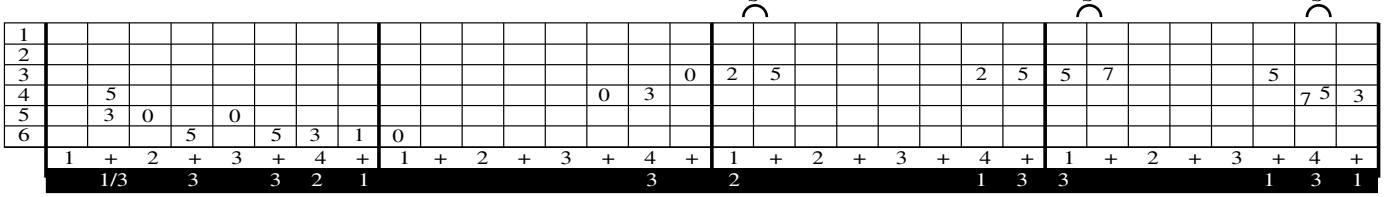

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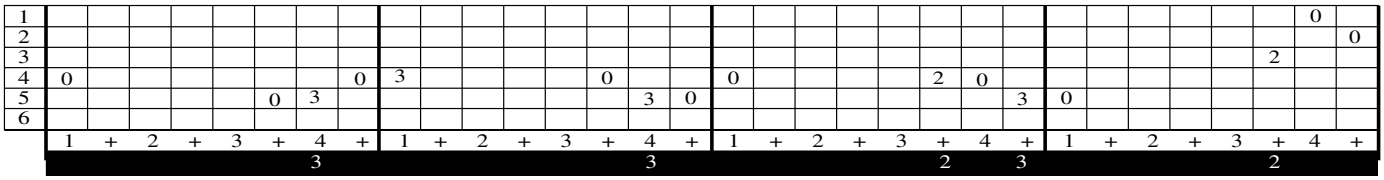

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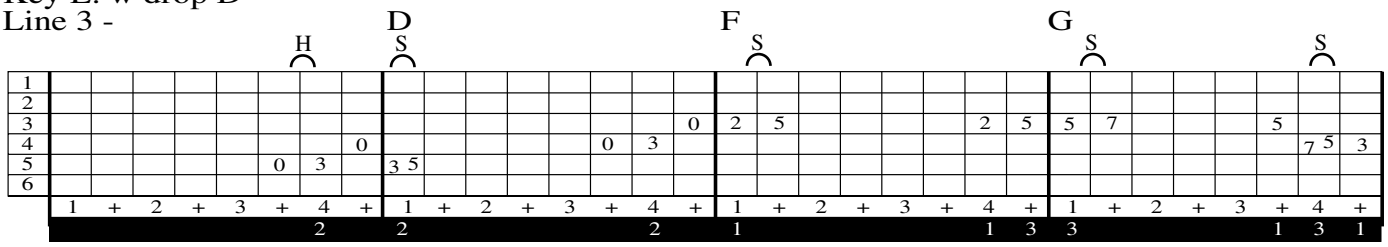

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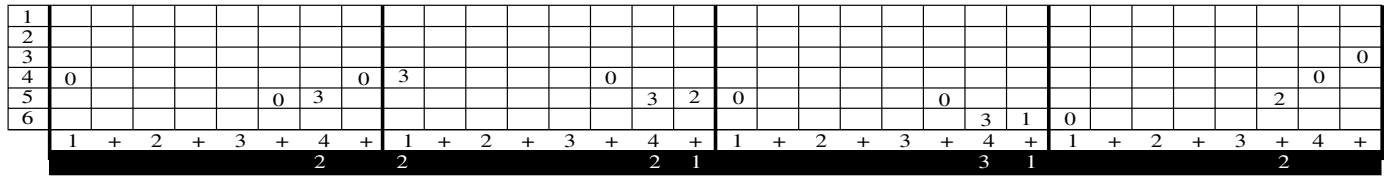

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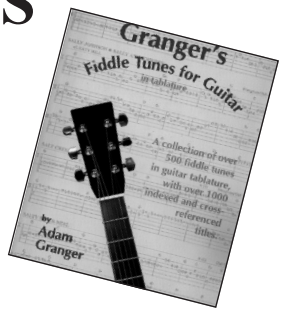
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Break Time

by Chris Jones

Playing Both Sides

You will encounter a number of songs in bluegrass music in which the melody essentially repeats itself half-way through the verse. When you are playing a break for a song like this the second half of the break will be melodically identical to the first half. Some examples of this kind of song are Bill Monroe's "Used to Be," "Down the Road" by Flatt & Scruggs, or the traditional song "In the Pines." Some songs, like "Rocky Top" ("Yes ma'am, we'll try to do that one in our 3rd set tonight"), are almost identical in their first and second halves, with an identical chord progression, but with a couple of note variations. In contrast to those, "Banks of the Ohio," "Roll In My Sweet Baby's Arms," and "Beat It" (just seeing if you were paying attention) are songs with distinctly different second halves of the verse melody.

How do you best handle a break for a song in which you're facing the same melody twice? One way is to simply repeat your own first half, note for note. Hey, the songwriter didn't bother to change anything, why should you, right? Well, one possible reason for avoiding this is that it's slightly boring for you and the listener. There's nothing technically wrong with doing it, however (no laws are being broken). You could also use the second half to "stretch out" and depart a bit from the melody that you've stated in the first half. It's certainly better to do it this way than the other way around: playing a bunch of licks, then settling down into the melody may give the impression that it took you half way through the break to remember what song you were playing.

Departing more from the melody in the second half is certainly a valid method, but there's also a compromise approach, which is to vary the second half while staying fairly melodic throughout. I've come up with a fairly simple break for the song "Christmas is Near," in honor of the approaching holiday.

"Christmas is Near," by the way, is an excellent Stanley Brothers Christmas song. They recorded it in the 1950s, so look out for it on various reissue packages or boxed sets. Larry Sparks also did a very nice rendition on his *Christmas In the Hills* CD, now out on Rebel. Competition was fairly fierce in bluegrass music in those days, so the fact that this title is reminiscent of Bill Monroe's "Christmas Time's A-Comin'" may not be a coincidence.

In the following break I stuck very close to the melody but varied the way I played it slightly in the second half. You'll notice a recurring lick that happens three times but with a slight variation each time. I also saved the longest run of notes for the end, in keeping with the practice of having a simpler first half. The two halves can be reversed though, and you might try it for the practice. When you analyze the differences in the two halves and the slight variations in the connecting notes and kick-off licks, you'll discover that you can do this yourself in other songs. You'll also find that playing something that's almost the same as the way you just played it is a pretty good discipline exercise, and it can be pretty good music too.

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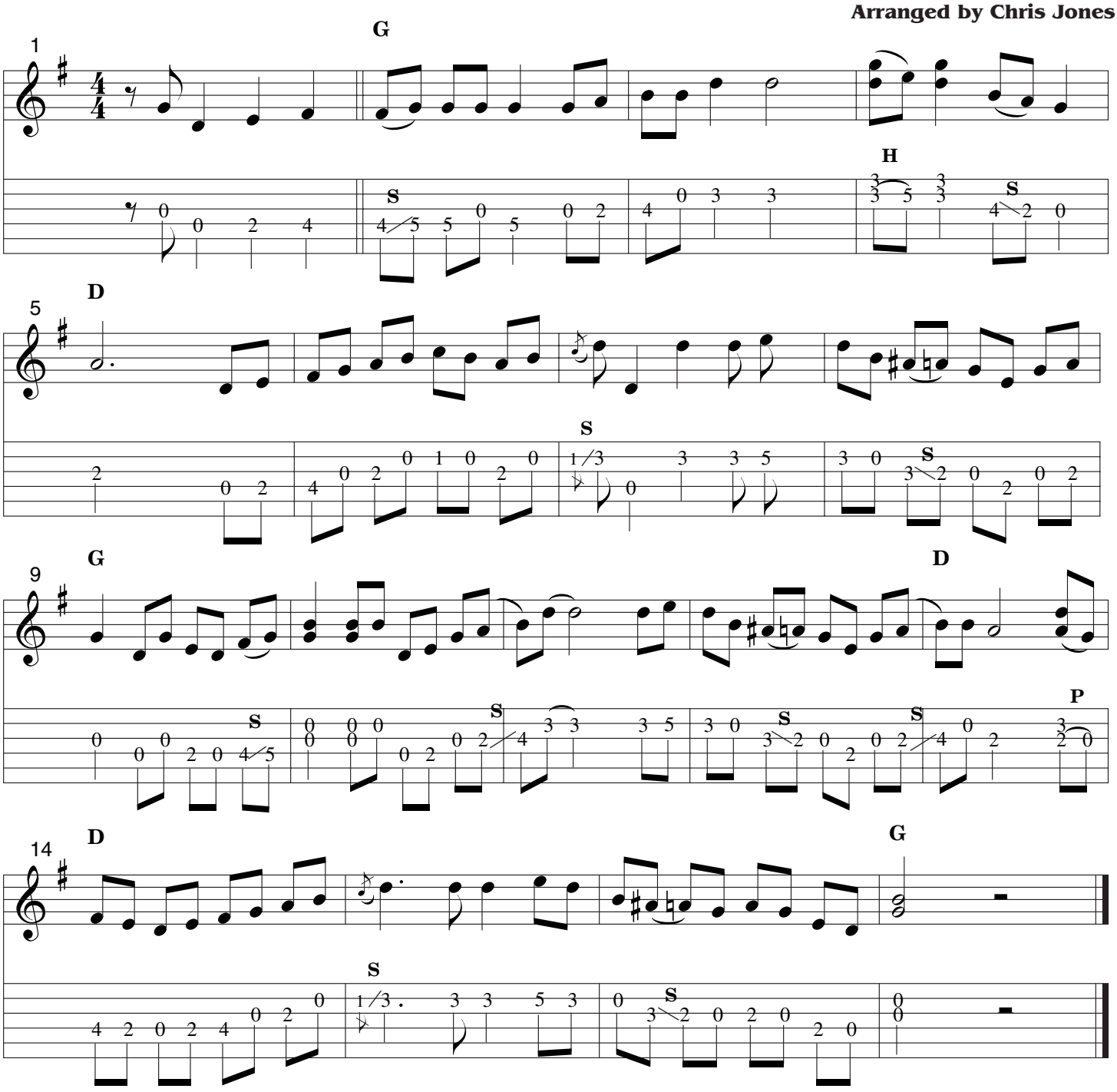
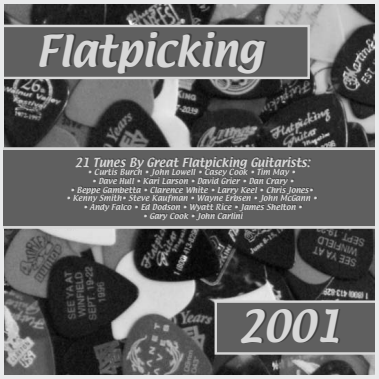
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JAM TUNES

"Stoney Creek" with Roy Curry

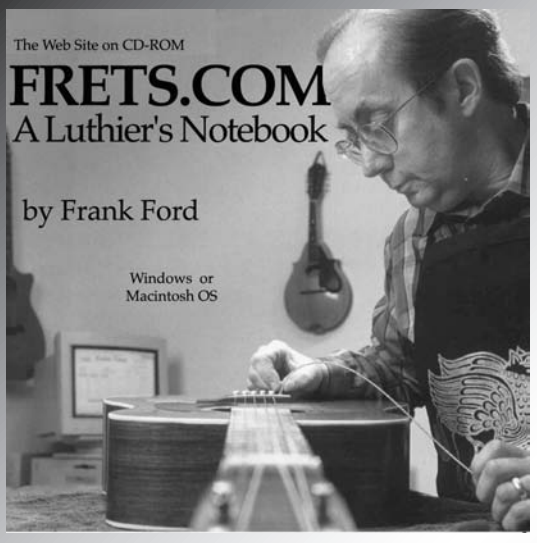
This issue's "Jam Tunes" tune comes to us from two-time (1980 and 1991) National Flatpicking Guitar Champion Roy Curry. We featured Roy in Volume 3, Number 4 of the magazine, back when his solo recording *Flat Top Specialist* came out.

Lately Roy has been performing with the Lone Mountain Band and he has been continuing to compete on the contest circuit. This year he won the New England Flatpicking Championships in July (and a Bourgeois guitar) and the Reno Fest Contest back in March (and a Henderson guitar). Roy's band plays at festivals throughout the southeast and is available for bookings (www.lonemountainband.com).

Although Roy is still active on the contest circuit, playing in the bluegrass band setting is what he likes to do best. He finds rhythm playing in a band setting both challenging and satisfying. He says, "Playing rhythm in a bluegrass band is hard and I think it is the most underrated position in the band. I have a lot of fun getting in sink with the bass and enjoying the whole groove. You don't have to have hot licks to be a good rhythm player, you just feel the rhythm."

The tune Roy performs for us for this issue is the classic jam tune "Stoney Creek." On the CD which accompanies this magazine he plays the tune one time through slowly (this is the version that we have tabbed out here) and then jams on it with his bandmates Diana Phillips on bass and Bobby Burns on mandolin.

We hope you enjoy Roy Curry's arrangement of "Stoney Creek."



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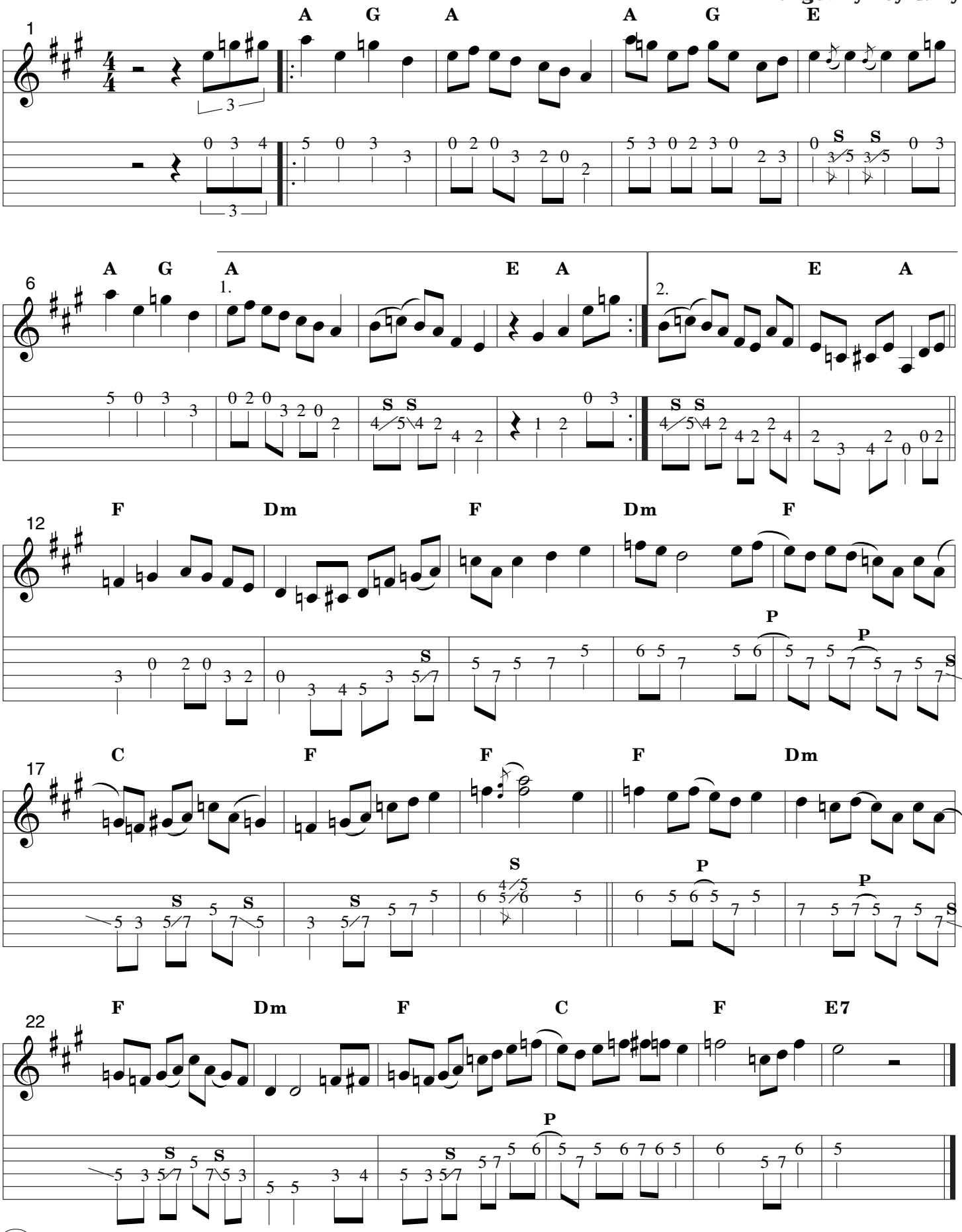

Todd Sams Guitars

by
David Dugas

Todd Sams with his "employees" Mackenzie and Kylee Sams

What sometimes appears to be overnight success is rarely, if ever such a thing. This is especially all true in the arts. Artists of every persuasion; including musicians, visual artists, and crafts people of every discipline spend many, many years perfecting their craft; whether that is dance, design, music or lutherie. One such person is luthier Todd Sams of Athens, Ohio, who only recently has come to the guitar buying public's attention because Clay Hess of the Ricky Skaggs band plays one Todd's instruments.

What prompted your initial interest in Lutherie?

I used to own a D-28, which was dropped and damaged. I had it at a local repair place for almost a year and it was never touched, so I got tired of waiting for it. Around that same time I started working at Stewart-McDonald. Don MacRostie, who builds Red Diamond Mandolins, talked me into fixing it myself. I'd say that it was a month or 2 later when I built my first guitar. Since then I've sort of leaped froged back and forth building mandolins and guitars, with a lot of banjos in there—but mostly mandolins and guitars. I've worked at Stewart-McDonald for 10 years

When did you build your first guitar?

That would have been 1991 or '92. It was probably 1992.

Can you tell me about the materials you use and your construction techniques?

The materials are pretty much standard. I use mahogany and Indian rosewood for back and sides and I've used Brazilian rosewood. If you can find good Brazilian then it is fine, but I've used some of the cheaper stuff and have not been happy with it. I'm not into rosewood for bridges or fingerboards, so I use ebony. I'm big on red spruce for the bracing and the top and I use bone nuts and saddles. I use our vintage style bridge pins without the slots. I really believe in slotting the bridge. Slotting the bridge is one of the most common repairs I do for other people's guitars.

Have you used Sitka or Englemann or any of the other Spruces for the tops?

Yes, I've used Sitka and Englemann and I'd say I've had good success with it. I don't have any problem with the sound I get out of either wood. The one thing about red spruce is it's stiffer, so I can do a little more with scalloping the braces. In the last three years I've gone to using only forward X-bracing. I use Waverly tuners, grained ivoroid for the rosewood and tortoise for the mahogany, which are sort of standard old 30's Martin's appointments except that I use tortoise instead of black plastic.

You mentioned that you have a preference for red spruce for the bracing and the top wood. Can you explain your preference?

It's the stiffness, which definitely helps. If the top is stiffer you can shave a little more off the bracing, which will make the guitar more flexible, but at the same time it will still have enough stiffness so that it's not going to develop much of a belly. With red spruce bracing you can scallop it even more and keep the stiffness that you want, but it's definitely a balancing act. You want it stiff enough so that it's not going to cave in and not going to belly up. You want it flexible enough to where it's going to pump the air out of the box.

Do you have a preference for grain width in the red spruce you use?

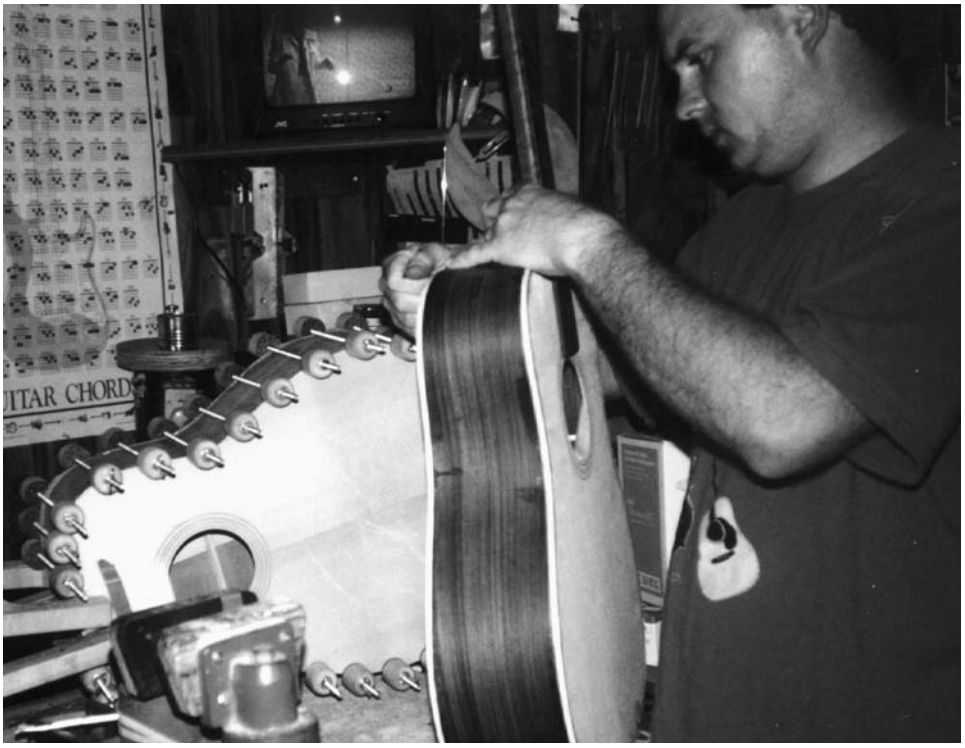
Yes, wide grain. I was really shocked when I started using the wider grain stuff at how stiff it remained. Clay Hess's guitar is probably medium width grain line. One of the guitars I built for Fred Ricart was close to an eight of an inch between the grain lines.

The grain was consistently the same width across the top?

Yes, and it was snow white. It was the whitest red spruce I've ever seen. I get that wood from John Griffin. I think he supplies Santa Cruz and Collings and some of the other builders too.

Are you using any unusual techniques for the brace shape, brace position or the back and sides?

I would say my scalloping is a little different than the old 30's Martin. It's positioned a little more towards the soundhole in the X-brace area. I don't use the tape on the sides. I use Red Spruce strips on the sides to keep the sides from cracking. I also use our



Todd Sams fits the neck on one of his rosewood guitars. A Sams mahogany guitar is in the background

double truss rod, the Stew-Mac double rod. We had some tests performed a few years back where we compared an old T-bar, one of the Martin square tubes and our rod. We checked the deflection and the weight and our double rod was very close to the weight of a T-bar, which was pretty nice. I've just never had any luck with the square tube. I have built a few guitars with the T-bar, but I prefer to have some adjustment in the neck, which the T-bar doesn't have. I try to build more for the lead players than rhythm players. If somebody wants to want to dial their action, it's nice to have an adjustable rod.

With the exception of the double truss rod and the red spruce reinforcement on the side, it sounds like your guitars are fairly traditional in construction?

My forward X-brace is slightly different. It's around an inch from the soundhole like the Martin X-brace, but I spread mine out a little more. It opens up the top and the area around the bridge a little bit more for vibrations. That's another plus to using a stiff red spruce top.

Is the double truss rod you are currently using a compression rod?

No, with a compression rod you are crushing the wood end to end until it bows the neck. The rod we make has a passive rod at the bottom that doesn't move, whereas the rod at the top does move. When you turn it one way, it gets longer. It has a nut at each end, so when you turn the top rod one way, that rod will spread the nuts apart and tries to increase the distance between the two nuts. Since the bottom rod doesn't move, it actually puts the rod into a bow. When you turn the rod the opposite way the top rod tries to decrease the distance between the nuts. Since the bottom rod doesn't move, it tries to move the opposite direction, so it takes a lot less effort to adjust your neck. I've never really liked the idea that you have to sort of crush the wood enough until it forces the neck to bow.

What is your standard nut width and neck shape?

The nut width is 1 3/4". I try to keep my neck shape slim and sort of thin; probably the best description I can think of is the Santa Cruz Tony Rice models. Clay had one of those for a few years and I ended up buying it off of him. I used it as a template for my neck shape for quite a while. His guitar's neck is a little fuller than that particular guitar's neck.

What's your standard setup at the 12th fret?

I set up my guitars to what I prefer and then increase the action a little. If a heavy bluegrass player used my guitar with my setup, he would have to raise it a little bit. I also play mandolin and banjo, so I like the action as light as possible. I typically stick to Martin specs for bluegrassers who don't flatpick very much.

Do you prefer a lot of neck relief or do you like the neck flat?

I like to get the neck as flat as possible without getting… I wouldn't call it a buzz, because that's not what it is. It's kind of a snapping sound when you hit the strings.

What are your standard appointments on one of your 28-style guitars?

Red spruce top, Indian rosewood back and sides, ivoroid binding and herringbone purfling. I didn't use herringbone on a couple of guitars, but I really like the looks of it, so I've gone back to it as a standard. The back strips come and go. It depends on the wood and what the customer wants. I can put the standard 28-style back strip in, but if you get a really nice dark piece of rosewood a lot of times I won't put a backstrip in because it looks nicer without it.

Do you use a "popsicle" brace on your guitars?

No. I was very fortunate a couple of years ago to meet a guy by the name of Fred Ricart in Columbus, OH. He owns the world's largest car dealership. And he's a huge collector. A lot of people don't know him except a few guys that are into selling vintage Martins. I built a few guitars for Fred and he wanted to try some different things. I'd go up to his house and hang out and play his guitars.

One night I think I played 18-20 all pre-'38 Herringbones. He's really the person that turned me towards the forward X-bracing because he had so many great examples. Every one of those guitars I tried were just fantastic. The standard X-braced guitars all sounded good, but you could tell a big difference with the advanced X-brace instruments. The tops on the guitars were fine, especially up in that area (where the popsicle brace supports the top/fingerboard area). I didn't see any sign that the neck block had shifted from not having the brace.

Now, I put a little piece of red spruce about a quarter inch wide, maybe an eight inch thick, a half inch on either side of the

fretboard. It's about the fretboard width plus about an extra inch just to strengthen that area along the sides of the fretboard. I think from what I've seen in the past the problem is the fretboard shrinks up a little bit where it's glued to the top. I think this helps stabilize and support that area.

What bridge plate material are you using?

I use a small hard maple bridgeplate. I prefer small bridge pads.

What kind of glue are you using?

Currently, I'm using Titebond Imperial glue, which is fairly new. Bill Collings turned me on to it and it seems to work very well. It is as close to hide glue without actually being there. One problem I have right now is I'd like to be able to just use hide glue, but I'm going to have to build a room that I can keep hot before I can jump into using it a whole guitar.

Are you using a standard sized soundhole or a large soundhole?

I use a standard sized soundhole. I've built a couple of guitars with a Tony Rice style soundhole and they sounded fine, but they don't project as much.

How did you determine that large soundholes don't project as much as small soundholes?

Typically by just having someone out in front of it to hear it. You can usually hear them really well at the guitar, but the farther away you get from the guitar, the less you hear compared to a standard soundhole.

I have a theory on that. Basically, if you look at the guitar box as an air pump, the strings make the noise and the box pumps the air. So, the more flexible you have your top without it being weak, the more air it will pump. Try to imagine a garden hose when it's fully open, the water just pours out. As soon as you start to close up the garden hose tip it shoots the water out further. I imagine the sound from the soundhole the same way. You know the big soundhole on Tony's guitar? The sound just kind of gushes out, so it tends to stay around the guy playing it a little bit more. And when you've got the soundhole closed off that air pressure is increased when the top vibrates up and down, so it actually forces the air out of the hole faster and gets it farther away from the instrument.

Do you also repair guitars?

Yes, that's probably the biggest thing that has kept my numbers down up to this point. I keep fairly busy with repairs. I try and sweep it back, but then the season comes along. I'm pretty heavy into bluegrass, acoustic stuff like that, so this time of the year gets me pretty heavy. I've got a '41 Herringbone and a couple of old D-18's in right now to work on. I've got three guitars to build and it's hard to get in there and concentrate on them with these repairs.

How many guitars have you built so far?

Fifteen guitars so far. And I have already started numbers 16 through 18.

How long does it typically take you to construct an instrument?

If I don't have any heavy repair work, I can usually do it within 2-3 months.

You are building instruments part time while you work full time at Stew-Mac?

Right, the Stew-Mac thing is a full time job. That's basically what slows me down. I've been there for over 10 years.

How many guitars do you build a year? Have you found that you built fewer at first then it increased over the last 5 years or so?

Yeah, it's definitely come up in the last couple of years. I would say three last year and probably 5 to 8 by the end of this year. Shop size is another thing that really hampers me right now. I plan on taking care of in the next year or so.

What is your current waiting list?

Right now the three that I'm working

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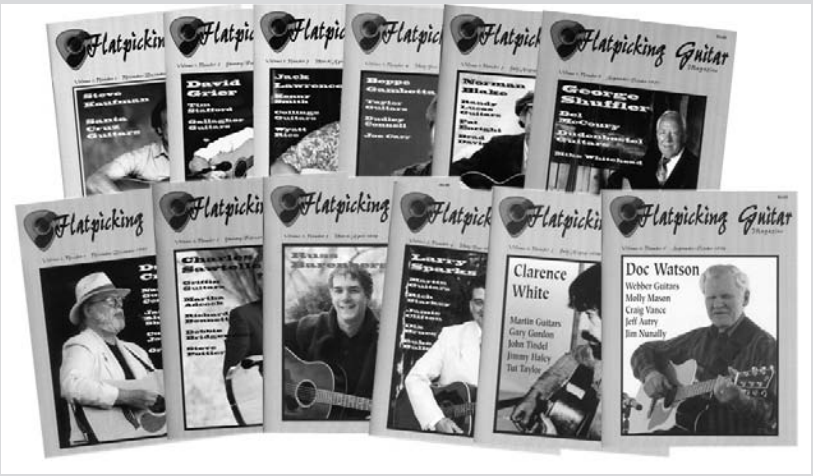
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on are spoken for, but other than that, I'd say it's probably 3-4 months. I've got some people that haven't committed, but if anybody was interested as of this date it would be about that time frame.

You mentioned earlier that you also build mandolins? F-style and A-style?

I've only built one A-style mandolin. It was kind of a nice break from fooling with the scrolls. I've built 19 F-style mandolins.

Let's talk about Clay Hess. Can you tell me a little bit about his guitar and how your association with him came about?

Actually, Clay and I had played together for a few years. Quite a few years before he started playing with Ricky (Skaggs), I did all the work on his guitars. He had some older D-18s. When he got with Skaggs he had a 1950 D-18 and the Bourgeois thing came up. Clay sold that D-18 and Dana built him a couple of guitars. He had wanted one of my guitars at the time, but with that Bourgeois thing he had just assumed that if you were in that band you played a Bourgeois guitar. So, when he felt comfortable enough he asked Ricky about it and he said "No, you can play what you want."

He wanted to go back to the Mahogany sound that he had with the 18, so, we just did a red spruce/mahogany, forward X-brace 18-style guitar. I think he has a Baggs double barrel pickup system in it. I like the long saddles and with the pickup in there you typically have a closed in saddle with a transducer, so I cut the saddle all the way through and then I glued bone in the ends and shaped it so that it would look like the end of a long saddle. Then I finished cutting it the rest of the way on the inside of that so it actually is a closed in saddle, but it's got bone on each side of it that makes it look like a long saddle. I just kept that nice look.

Clay playing with Ricky has been a great situation for me. He's a fantastic guitar player. I don't know if you have heard him or not, but they have a new recording that will be out in September and it's really the first chance that anybody's had to hear him flatpick on a recording because I think the only thing he's done with Ricky up to this point was the *Soldier of the Cross* thing and he just played rhythm on that recording. It'll definitely perk up some ears.

What you'll hear on the new recording is more of what he can really do. Clay said that his new guitar made it on "One Way Track," "Sawin' on the Strings," and rhythm on "Rollin' in my Sweet Baby's Arms." On all the rest of the cuts he had already recorded with Ricky's Brazilian Bourgeois.

One thing that I've noticed in the first year and a half that he was with Ricky, he was sort of holding back. I only imagine it was because he was playing Bryan Sutton's breaks. How far do you stretch out beyond something that Bryan Sutton has recorded a break to? The new recording is what I remember him playing like before he got with Ricky. I think you guys will get a kick out of it.

Has working for Stew-Mac helped you develop your guitar building skills?

One thing that really helps me move my instrument building forward is being able to try new things. I work in the research department at Stew-Mac and even though I'm not at home building guitars, I am spending my time at work designing tools for working on guitars. If I design something at work that's going to work for someone else I'll take it home and use it. I have that material at my disposal before anyone else, so it gives me a slight advantage.

The pool of people I'm around is also a big advantage. Dan Erlewine, who is one of the top repairmen in the world, works at Stew-Mac. Don MacRostie, who has built the Red Diamond mandolins for 20+ years, is the head of the R&D department at Stew-Mac. Bob White who taught Mike Kemmitzer of Nugget Mandolins is there. Pete Harte, who builds Buckeye Mandolins, is also there. It's definitely helpful having those guys around me because they critique me, which is a nice thing to have. You don't want too many people around that love everything you do because you don't see the things you need to fix.

Who is your biggest influence in building instruments?

I would say as far as trying new things, and not being afraid to try the new things, that would definitely be Don MacRostie. Don doesn't do a lot with guitars, but he's pushing 200 mandolins right now and that's part time. His mandolins are definitely high class instruments. Just watching him and the way he's always been with tooling up is an inspiration. I work with him every day in that specific department. That's another one of the things I do besides designing tools, I get to build the jigs for the shop. We just started putting together a guitar kit a few years ago and I build all of the jigs for making the guitar parts. Although we are selling those as kits, I'm the one who made all of the jigging. I'll make my necks on those jigs too. I'll take wood in to run 'em. That's always been an odd spot with me; I feel that they are definitely not kits. They are just an easier way to make the parts. I mean, I definitely don't have the time to sit around with a spokeshave and carve out a neck.

And as far as the influences, I would say that Bob White is definitely another big influence. He's probably the first repair person I met around here. Fred Ricart is another major influence. As far as what I've done structurally, Fred Ricart would definitely be the guy that influenced me in that area by showing me so many guitars. He buys those specific years for a reason because he's consistently found them to sound better than the non-forward X-brace guitars. I've never heard so many consistently nice guitars in my life as I have with his guitars. It definitely influenced me to drop that regular X-bracing and go to the forward. I've felt far more confident in getting a sound I like out of a guitar since then. Pete Hart is another major influence.

Are you using CNC for your instruments?

Actually, we don't have a single CNC machine at Stew-Mac. It's all shapers and over arm routers. That's another plus about working at Stew-Mac. If there's something that doesn't quite seem right I can catch it a little faster because I'm using my parts, which are the same as the parts that come off of the machines. Although you still have to do all the shaping on 'em. I've also got 'em to make some slight changes to make 'em a little more traditional.

How long do you believe it takes your guitars to start breaking in enough for you to hear a difference in the instrument?

It definitely depends on how much the person plays it. Clay's guitar came in pretty quick. It's actually quite surprising how fast that guitar came around especially being red spruce. I think the red spruce takes a little longer because of the stiffness to break in. I'm not trying to dance around the time thing, but that's one thing I try to do with scalloping. I really have this thing

against buying a new instrument and you hear guys say, "Oh yeah, in 3 or 4 years that thing will be a great sounding guitar." It's big with mandolins too. "You got to break it in for a few years before you play it." Well, I feel like if you buy one, it'll be nice to have it sounding it pretty well when you get it. So I try and shave my bracing so that it's responsive right away. But, I would say definitely within the first 3-6 months it's pretty much there other than what little bit you get from the age and the cells loosing their moisture over the years. I think that's the biggest thing you get with the age. With the old herringbones, I just think that the water is going out of every cell of the wood on the old instruments and they are just dry as can be and it really helps that sound.

How would you characterize the sound of your mahogany and rosewood guitars?

I would say the rosewood has a boomy, gutsy sound. When I build guitars, or mandolins, I try and build to a benchmark sound. I've always been a Tony Rice nut and the sound of that herringbone on certain recordings is what I shoot for in my guitars.

As far as the D-18, I really don't try to build the guitars so they have their own sound. I actually would like for the two guitars (D-28 and D-18) to sound similar, if that makes sense. It's always bothered me that you should have to get less money for a mahogany guitar than a rosewood guitar. I don't think it should be a matter of how much money you have to spend. I think it should be a matter of which one you like.

If you want a rosewood guitar you buy it, if you want a mahogany one you buy it. It shouldn't be a matter of if you don't have enough money for the rosewood then you have to drop back to a mahogany guitar. And with that, I would say that guitar of Clay's it's definitely somewhere between what you hear out of a 28 and an 18. It's got a pretty good 28 type of bass response and it's got a nice dry 18 sound, especially when you capo up into a B or a Bb.

Why do you think his guitar fits more in the middle between mahogany and rosewood?

I attribute it to spreading the X brace out and opening that top up a little bit. The mahogany was pretty heavy in his guitar. That's another plus about working about Stew-Mac. I can pick through some of the choice woods and get some of the stuff that I like the best. As far as the rosewood, I can look through there and get the really dark, harder stuff and stay away from the ashy stuff. You'll see the same thing with the mahogany. Some of that is kind of pinkish and not as stiff and hard and I'll try and stay away form that.

On the new recording Ricky has coming out, I got the guitar to Clay right in the middle of the recording session, so half of this recording he's playing a rosewood Bourgeois guitar and the second half of the recording he's playing the mahogany guitar. It's kind of nice to make the comparison in the sound of the two guitars.

Earlier you mentioned that Clay's guitar is heavy. Is that because of the weight of the mahogany or the weight of the top?

I would say the top; I think I take the top to about .0110, which wouldn't be considered extremely thin. By using the red spruce, I feel safer about also taking the braces thin down a little bit more in the dips for the scalloping.

What are the prices for your guitars?

The mahogany guitar is $1800 with the Waverly tuners and the hard-shell case. The rosewood is $2000.

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THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

Far Away

"Far Away" is a haunting waltz that's garnered a favored spot in the repertoire of many a New England contra dance band. It was written by Pete Jung, a musician from the Catskills region in upstate NY. (Though Pete's primarily a bass player, this tune came to him on the mandolin late one evening after returning home from a piquant contra dance encounter.)

I recorded "Far Away" on mandolin on my last CD (*Sultans Live!*), but recently realized that it also scans very well on the guitar (capoed on the second fret and played in Am; it's actual key is Bm).

As with some other waltzes I play (like "Star of the County Down"), it is possible to play this one both as a regular lead (when you have somebody else playing rhythm) and as a solo piece (when you don't), so I'm going to provide tabs of both versions.

All of the multiple string indications are pushes rather than strums; you want to keep your right hand firm when playing them. The only other trick (can you say "companion CD"?) is the syncopation of the final phrase. And is this not the coolest chord progression you've heard in quite some time?

"Brooklyn Bluegrass Maestro" Orrin Star is an award-winning guitar, banjo and mandolin player. The 1976 National Flatpicking Champion, he has toured and recorded widely, appeared on A Prairie Home Companion and is the author of Hot Licks for Bluegrass Guitar. *See www.flatpick.com/ostar.*

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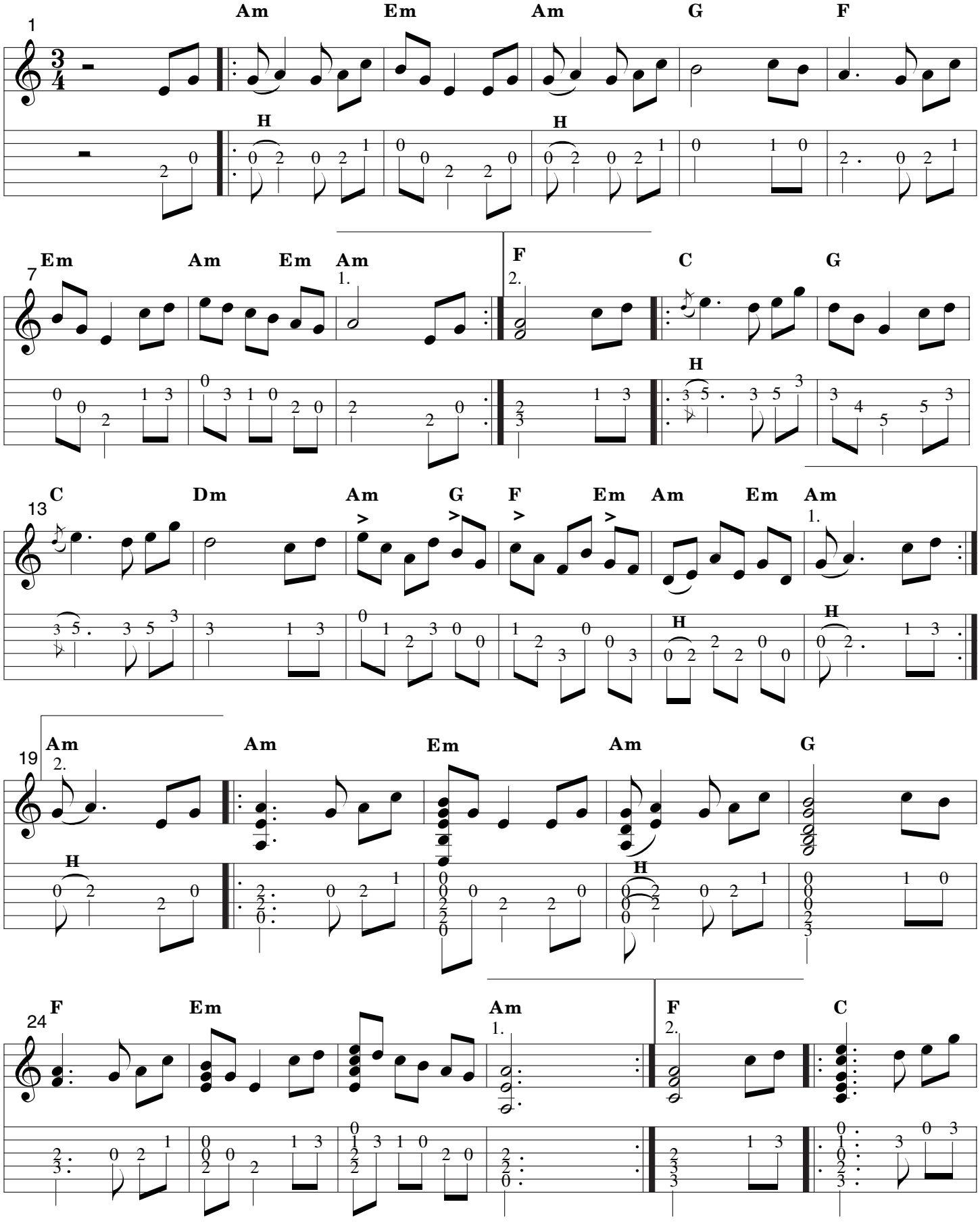
Far Away

Arranged by Orrin Star

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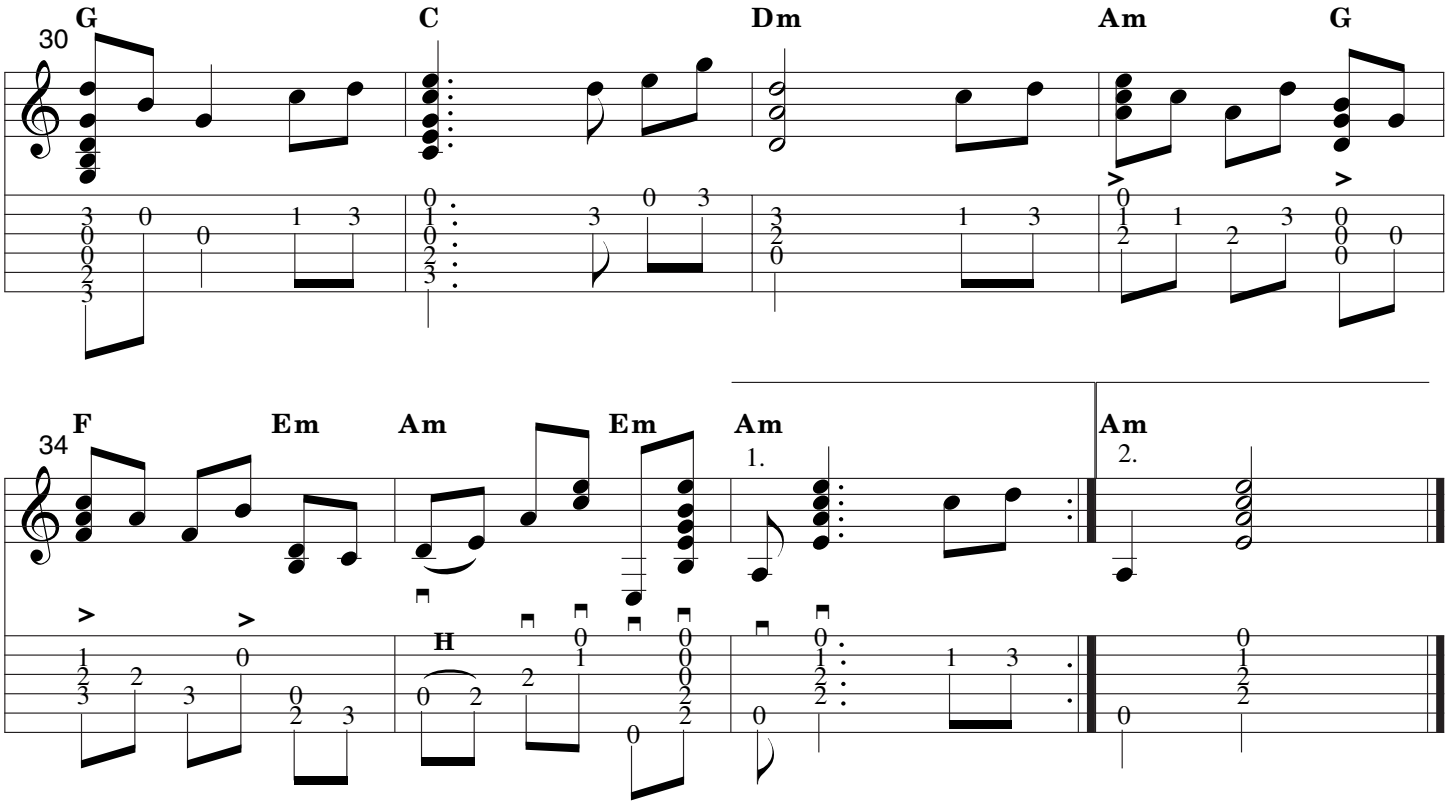
> = accent note ⊓ = downstroke

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Charlie Monroe's Backup

by Dix Bruce

I learned guitar in a kind of haphazard way. My study was not at all comprehensive or methodical. I only tried to learn songs and techniques that I particularly liked, usually something that was within my easy reach. I'd typically listen to a recording just enough times to write out the lyrics or chords and be able to reproduce the general idea of the song myself. I rarely, especially when I was a beginner, tried to copy a player or singer's notes exactly. I had neither the patience nor talent to do such a thing and thus it held no interest for me. At the same time I would be amazed by picking buddies who had figured out Doc Watson's "Way Downtown" or "Black Mountain Rag" off the record.

As I picked my way toward mediocre intermediatehood, I began to resent these hot shots. Semi-publicly I would decry their lack of a personal style while privately I was a bit envious. I told myself that at the end of the day, I would have my own style that they would sound like pale imitations of Doc or Tony Rice, or Dan Crary. Ah, the ignorance of a youthful and well developed ego!

Then I met a wonderful bluegrass musician and singer named Jerry Wicentowski. I asked him how anybody could ever listen fast enough to hear all the notes of "Black Mountain Rag." He said, "Try a two speed tape recorder. Dub the tune at regular speed and play it back at half speed and it'll be in the same key, just an octave lower." I tried it, and was finally able to slow licks and solos down enough to learn them. This was the beginning of a new era for me.

One of the first transcriptions I worked on was the crosspicked solo Keith Whitley played with Ralph Stanley on "Will You Miss Me." While working it out was a challenge, the experience gave me great confidence in both my ability to transcribe difficult songs or solos and also in my potential to progress as a guitarist. My basic attitude was still to get the general idea of a solo, not an exact replica, and to always add my own ideas. Over the intervening years I have continued to transcribe solos and songs and have published several collections of transcriptions, including *Rounder Old Time*, *Doc Watson and Clarence Ashley: The Original Folkways Recordings 1960-1962,* and *Shady Grove—The Acoustic Guitar of Jerry Garcia*.

Lately I have been going back and re listening to many of the recordings that first influenced me. Most are old time, bluegrass, or jazz classics that I try to deconstruct, analyze, and see how the parts are assembled. I'm amazed at what I'm discovering and how much I'm learning! I'm re-experiencing this great music studying it in depth for the first time.

A great deal of my renewed interest can be traced to the availability of pristine CD versions of recordings by Monroe, The Carter Family, Jimmy Martin, Flatt & Scruggs, and other greats. I either never had the actual recordings to study or the old LPs I have are worn and scratched. It's such an inspiration to hear these pioneers sounding their best.

I recently bought the first two CDs in a continuing reissue series of *The Monroe Brothers* on Rounder. Man, those guys picked fast! I was fascinated again by Bill Monroe's mandolin playing and decided to try to transcribe some of his solos. Along the way I began to appreciate anew Charlie Monroe's wonderful guitar playing and decided to try transcribing some of his work as well. I wanted to determine exactly what notes he played.

Charlie's playing with Bill in the mid-1930s is a textbook example of the role of rhythm guitar in a small string band. It's perfect rhythmically and harmonically and a great compliment to the duo's singing and Bill's ferocious lead mandolin work.

I chose "Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms" because the song is both a well-known standard and the recording is especially clean and clear. It's the first cut on *Just a Song of Old Kentucky—The Monroe Brothers Vol. Two* (Rounder 82161-1074-2) and was originally recorded 10/12/1936.

Charlie establishes a fairly simple backup pattern (though at these brisk tempos nothing is exactly "simple") of bass notes and strums at the beginning of the song and stays with this same basic approach, varying it only slightly, throughout. At recurring points in a verse, chorus, or behind Bill's solos, Charlie might add a simple run. Overall it's another example of a great musician creating a sound which repeats again and again as a song unfolds. This is the same philosophy you'll find in innovators like Maybelle Carter, Earl Scruggs, Bill Monroe in his bluegrass days, and Doc Watson. They find something that's simple, something that works, something they are capable of playing, and make it the basis of a song or solo.

I transcribed most of Charlie's playing on the brothers' recording of "Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms." The excerpts below show his most typical patterns and runs.

The first is from Bill's first mandolin solo. Charlie emphasizes the fourth string, second fret E note in his pattern. (See measure M2, 4 etc.) This pattern is close to the one in "Wild About My Lovin'" which ran in this column previously. In M6 he uses a two note connecting run to go from the G chord to the D and then in M8 he walks back down to the G chord.

On the C chords (M11, 26, and 43) he never uses the sixth string, third fret G chord, as the alternate bass note of the "fifth" of the chord for the typical "root-fifth" bass note pattern. Instead, he plays the fourth string, second fret E note again, the "third" of the C chord. His bass note pattern here is "root-third," which is the same approach he uses on the G chord.

In M15 Charlie plays a great G run with a pull off. Lester Flatt is usually credited as the creator or at least the popularizer of various G runs, but here's Charlie playing one a good ten to twelve years before Flatt recorded with brother Bill. Maybe Lester

learned from Charlie or maybe they both learned from the same source, but there it is, 10/12/1936! He plays the run again in M47.

The next excerpt is from the first chorus, which you'll hear about twenty three seconds into the recording. The backup pattern is almost exactly the same as behind the introduction but there are a couple of notable changes. In M21 & 22, he leaves out the run. This may be because he's busy singing. In M23 Charlie plays an F# on the sixth string, second fret as his alternate bass note on the D chord. Again, as with the G and C chords, this is the "third" of the chord. I'm assuming he fretted this with his thumb. In the following measure he plays this sixth string F# again, this time as part of a connecting run to the G chord. He probably fretted this F# with the first or second finger of his fretting hand.

The final excerpt starts in M33 and it's the guitar backup behind the second mandolin solo at about thirty four seconds into the recording. Again, as you would expect from what you've seen thus far, his pattern of bass notes and strums is quite similar to that already established. There are some slight differences. In M39, he plays the fifth string open A as the first bass note on the D chord and follows it with the fourth string open D note as the second bass note. One might have expected the D note first since it's the root of the D chord and the bass note pattern is usually "root" then "five." We can only assume that Charlie meant to play it that way.

Immediately following that in M40 is a nifty little lick Charlie plays again and again in the song. In M42 he walks up from the G chord to the C chord. In M44 he plays a very unusual D bass note against the C chord and follows it with the somewhat unusual G and B bass notes moving into the D chord in M45. He doesn't play anything like this anywhere else in the song. His strum on beat two sounds like a G or D chord. He may have just jumped the gun on D chord. Again who knows if he meant to play it this way? I suggest that you play M43 & 44 as shown in measures 49 & 50 in the transcription, which is more typical of Charlie's playing in the song.

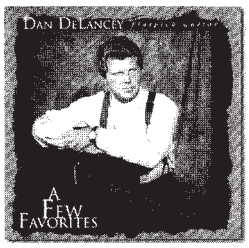
In M45 he plays the open sixth string E and then the sixth string, second fret F# bass note on his way back to the G chord.

Taken together, these excerpts offer a basic approach with variations to backup guitar in the old time/bluegrass style. You can use this basic approach on thousands of songs in these styles. As I mentioned previously, this type of rhythm guitar works well in smaller stringed ensemble. It might be a little busy for a full size bluegrass band. If you find yourself in that situation, simplify the pattern a bit. And while Charlie's playing here is not that difficult, he performs it so deliberately, with such strength, solid timing and great taste, that it fits perfectly in his duo with Bill. No doubt they evolved their separate roles over years of playing together and it served them both well. Keep that in mind as you incorporate some of Charlie's patterns and licks into your own playing.

Take it from me: there's a lot of gold in these old recordings. The more I develop as a musician, the more I'm able to hear and understand the talent of these great players. And, the practice of listening and trying to transcribe and learn what I hear has helped me develop and grow. Make it part of your practice routine and you'll see what I mean.

Dix's two newest books for Mel Bay Publications are Great Mandolin Pickin'Tunes*, (book & CD set) an eclectic collection of tunes for mandolin including Classical, Bluegrass, Gospel, Cajun, Ethnic, Christmas, Jazz, Irish, Old-Time, Italian, and Ragtime selections; and* Guide to Capo, Transposing, & the Nashville Numbering System*, a comprehensive explanation of music theory for guitarists which includes all the subjects mentioned in the title. His two newest instructional videos are from Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop and are titled* Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar *and* Basic Swing Guitar. *(TOLL FREE: 1-877-219-0441) Mel Bay is set to release Dix's book of Jerry Garcia Transcriptions from the Garcia/Grisman recording* Shady Grove *(excerpted in* Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*) plus a new BackUP TRAX play along book/CD set: Basic Blues in Fall 2001.*

DAN DELANCEY
FLATPICK GUITAR



Listening to him play, it is certainly evident that arrangement is something Dan does very well. His arrangements are interesting, exciting, tasteful and well performed.
—Dan Miller, Editor
Flatpicking Guitar Magazine

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Rolling In My Sweet Baby's Arms - Guitar Rhythm

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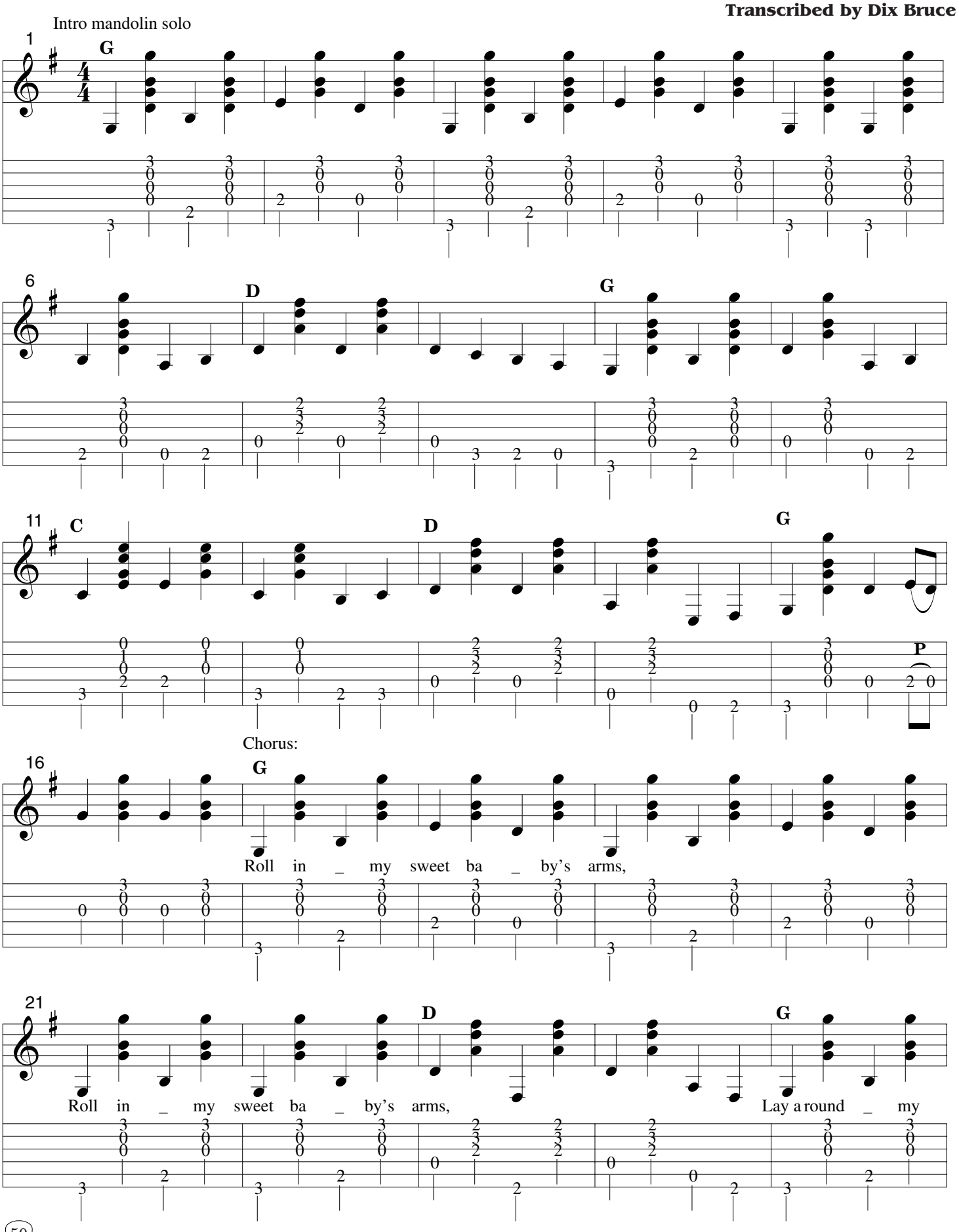
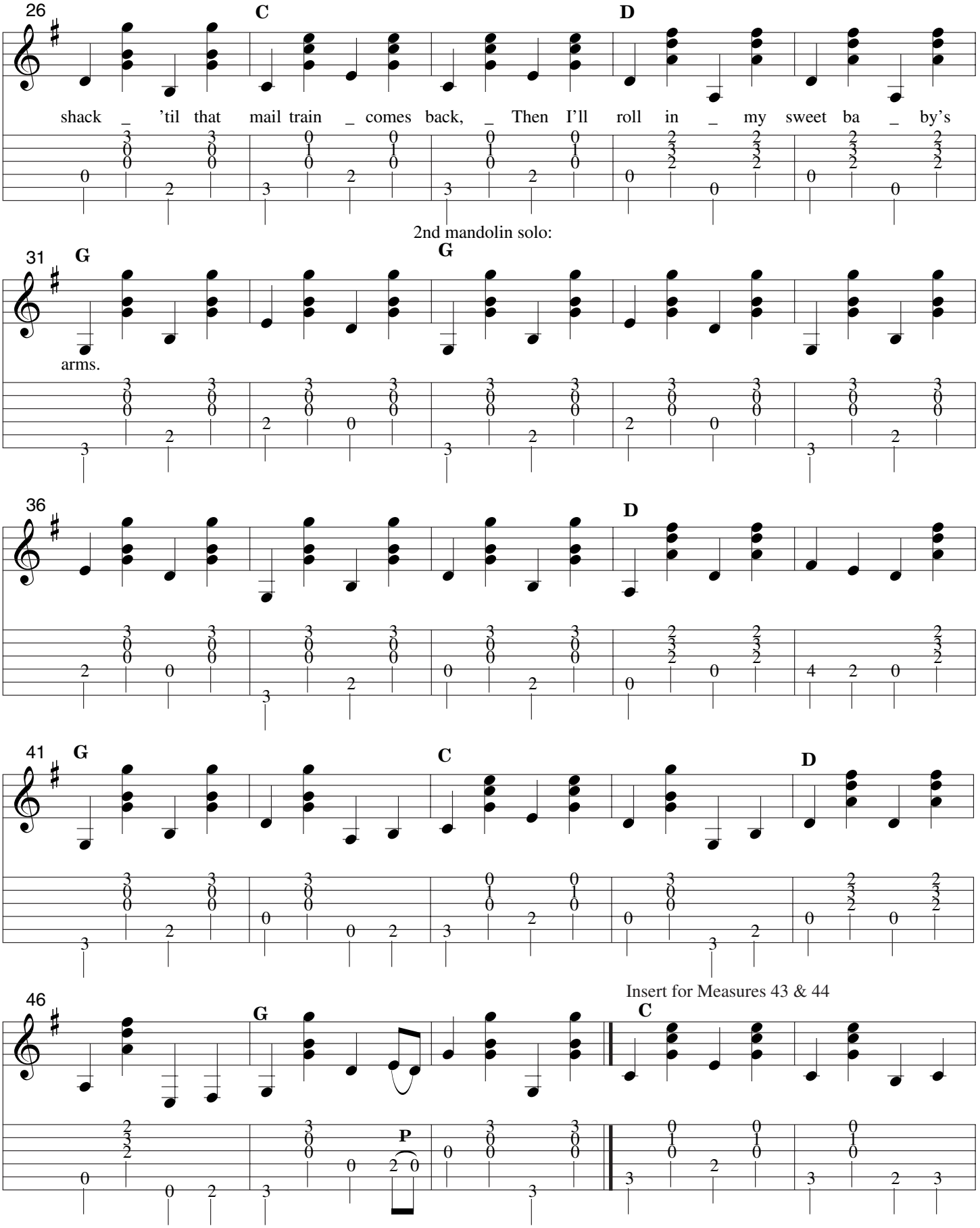

Rolling In My Sweet Baby's Arms - Rhythm (con't)

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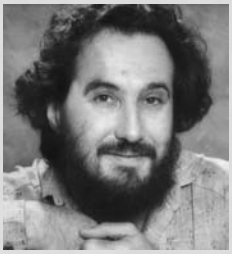
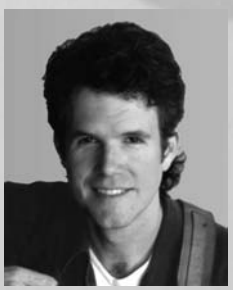
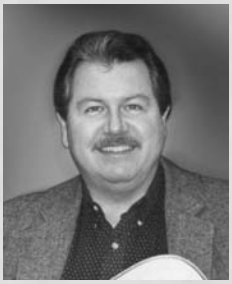


Eric Thompson



Chris Jones



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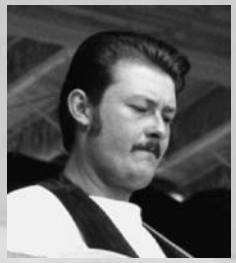

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Music Theory:
Mastering the Fingerboard
Technical Studies for Flatpickers

by Michel A. Maddux

Winfield, Kansas, September, 1983: The September sun beat down upon the assembled masses behind stage 2 at the fairgrounds in Winfield. The Friday afternoon flatpicking workshop was about to begin, and the crowd was packed and attentive. People in T-shirts and shorts were sitting on the grass near the stage, standing in the dirt road behind the snow-fence barrier, trying to take advantage of what little shade the cottonwood trees provided. The audience and students of flatpicking guitar were gathered for the guitar workshop, as always hosted by Dan Crary, and this time featuring guitar legends Tony Rice, Dudley Murphy, and Mark O'Connor.

Mark, having won top honors at the National Championship on guitar, mandolin, and fiddle, was returning as a featured entertainer at Winfield.

In the flatpicking workshop Mark had a chance to show why he was the hands-down winner of two previous flatpicking championships. Lyrical, fluid, and astonishing, he seemed to never repeat himself, and never resorted to stringing licks together to get through his break. Mark showed a level of virtuosity that is rarely heard in the world today. No small feat on a 6 string dreadnaught, and on that hot afternoon in the eastern Kansas autumn made even more impressive as Mark played the workshop using a 12-string Ovation guitar.

Prior to kicking off a version of "Memories of Mozart" which Mark shared with Crary, Dan jokingly commented, "When we were in the studio recording the guitar album, Mark played this on the fiddle, and, having never played it on the guitar, picked up the guitar and played it perfectly. It just ain't fair."

Mark proceeded to play a counter-point harmony to Dan's lead, as well as stating the melody perfectly.

When they played the "Cotton Patch Rag," Mark's improvised break included two octave arpeggios, 32nd note runs, tremolo, and effortless triplets. The Ovation 12-string seemed, in his hands, to be as easy to play as a 000 Martin strung with light gauge strings.

Mark rarely plays flatpicking guitar these days, as he is focused on the fiddle, performing with symphonies, with cello great Yo Yo Ma, and bassist Edgar Meyer. Fortunately for posterity, he did release an album that features his flatpicking, along with fellow musicians Tony Rice, Dan Crary, and David Grisman.

***Markology*:**

The *Markology* album was, and remains, both Mark's epiphany, and a seminal work for flatpicking. Released in 1979 when Mark had reached the ripe old age of 16 (and had already won top honors at Winfield for the second time), Mark showed the flatpicking community what a master of the fingerboard could do with a tune. His use of scales, interval skips, diminished, augmented runs, floaty licks, and harmonic scales, all within the context of the fiddle tunes presented, ("Blackberry Blossom," "Dixie Breakdown," among others), remains unequaled today.

In the liner notes, Norman Blake comments that "...he is first of all a champion fiddler, non-pareil, having won most of the major fiddle competitions in the U.S.A.... now 16 years of age, has cut his first solo guitar album, an effort so technically fine it is easy to forget that he is basically a fiddle player. His use of scales readily testifies to his knowledge of the violin and his guitar playing is a logical extension of this."

In 1997, fellow FGM columnist John Carlini completed a much-anticipated release of transcriptions of the *Markology* album for Mel Bay. For the first time, every tune and every note that Mark played was within reach of student of flatpicking guitar. As an aside, if you don't have the *Markology* album and associated transcriptions, get them! (available from Flatpicking Mercantile 800-413-8296.)

Anyway, to pull this all together for FGM, and in keeping with my objective of providing practical and useful exercises for the flatpicker, I wanted to use one of Mark's compositions to demonstrate his use of the chromatic scale as recorded on the *Markology* album.

Chromatic Scale

The chromatic scale is a scale form where all 12 notes of an octave are played. Usually, in the major and minor scales, for example, we play 8 notes. These eight notes are selected for the key signature and have intervals of a full step, followed by half step, followed by full step, and so on. In the chromatic scale, every note played is 1/2 step apart. The chromatic scale in the key of C, first position, is played as in example 1.

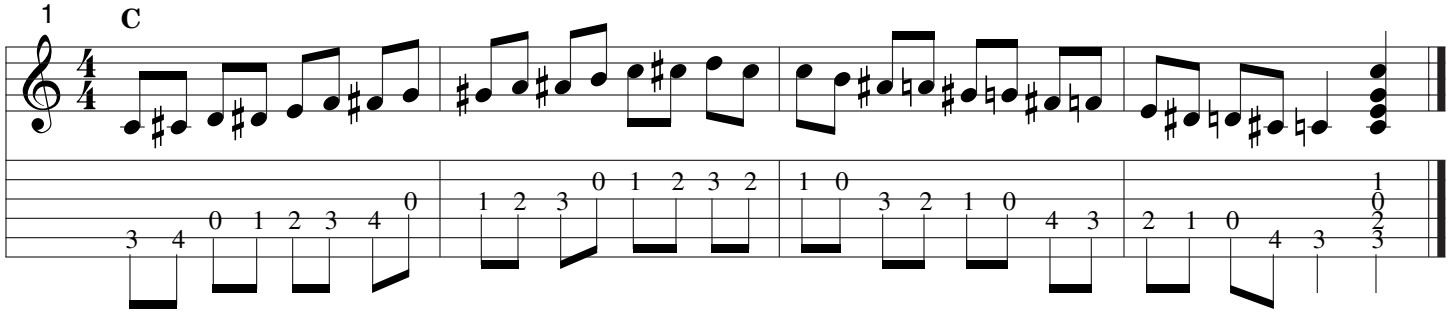
Now, playing through the example, you see the first position scale to the 9th scale degree. Interesting, but what is next? Well, learning the following two forms of the chromatic scale will allow you to play chromatics in any key you wish. These two forms are presented as the next two exercises that follow example 1.

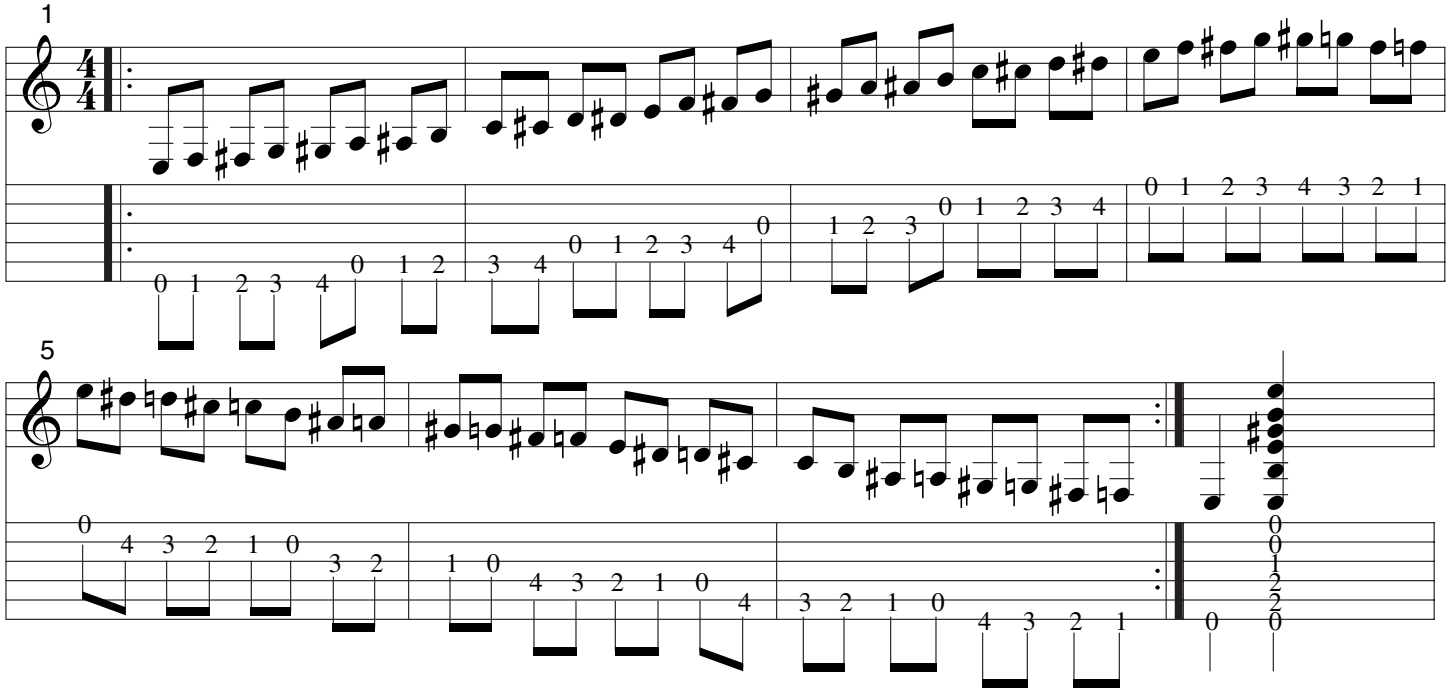
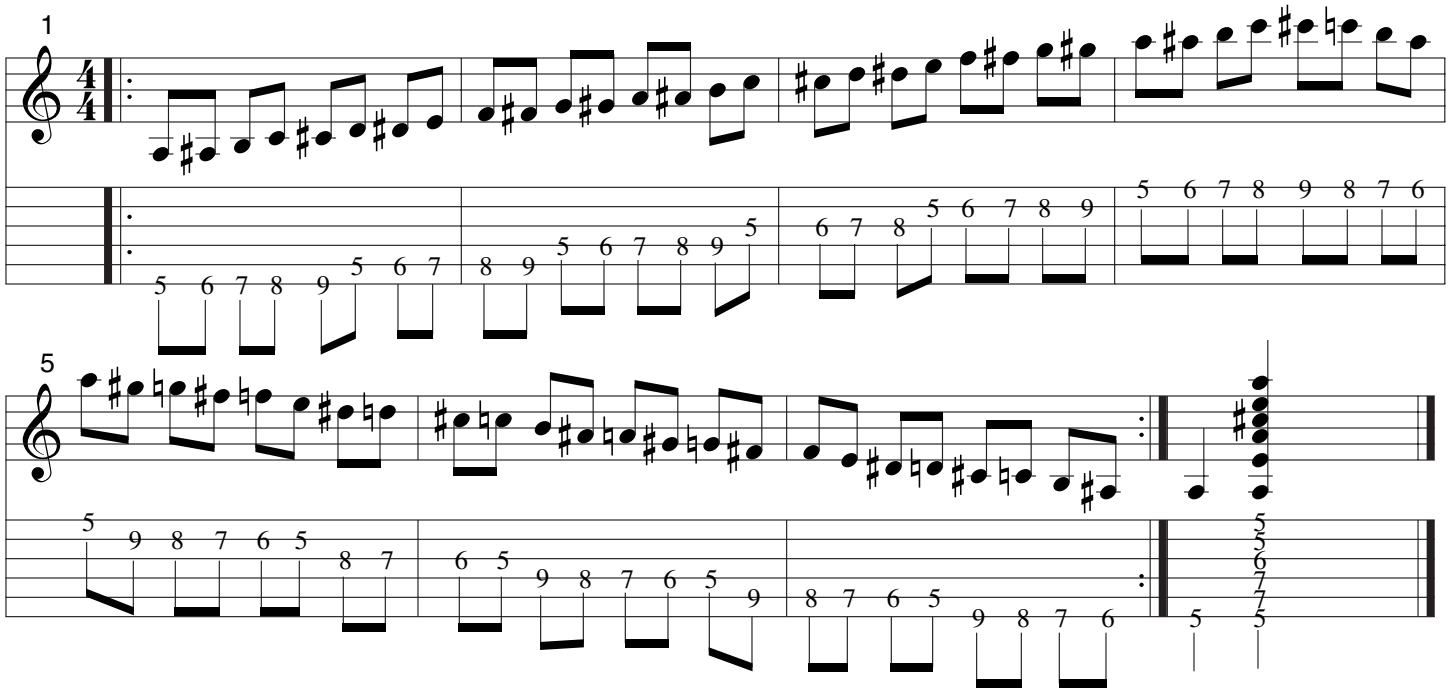
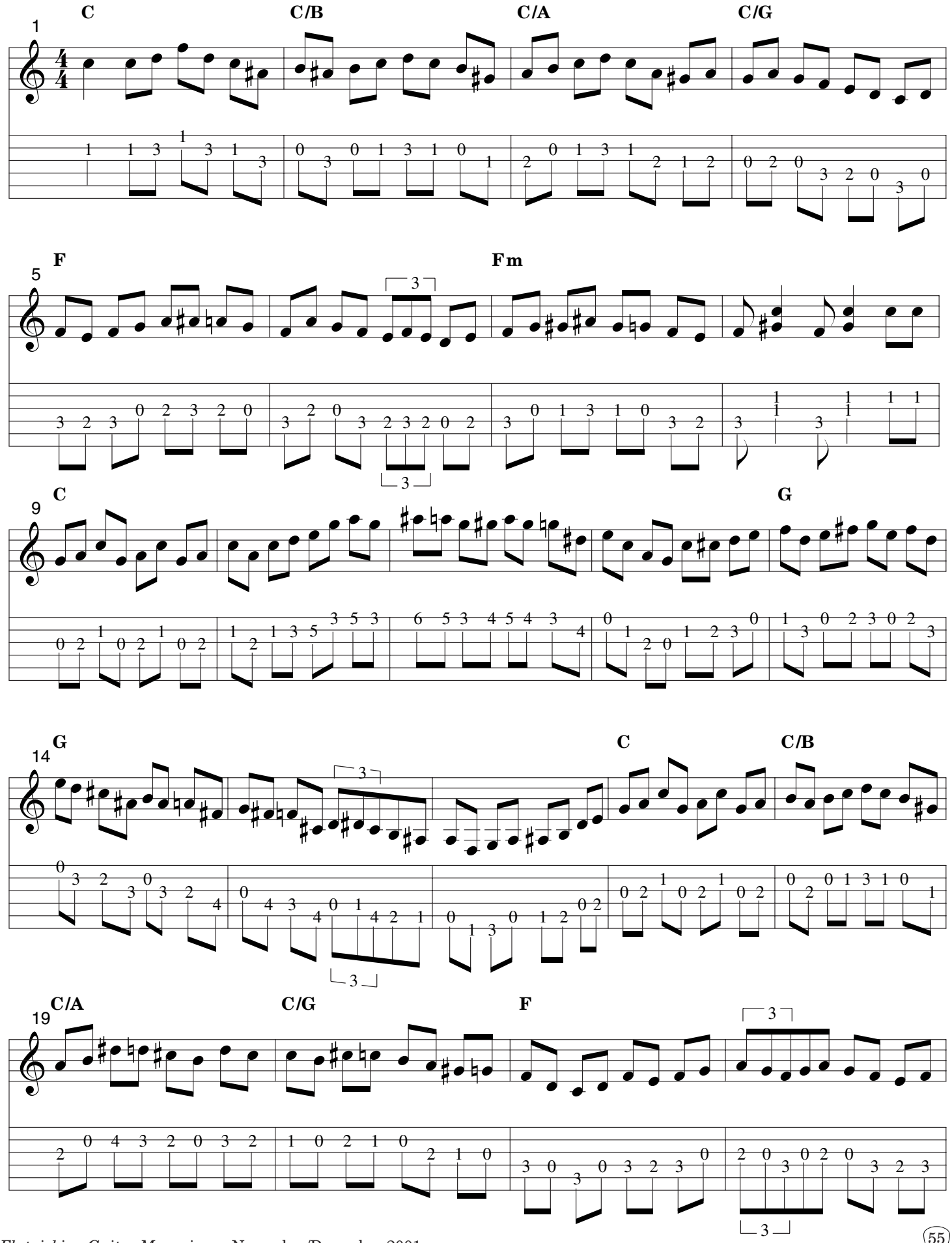
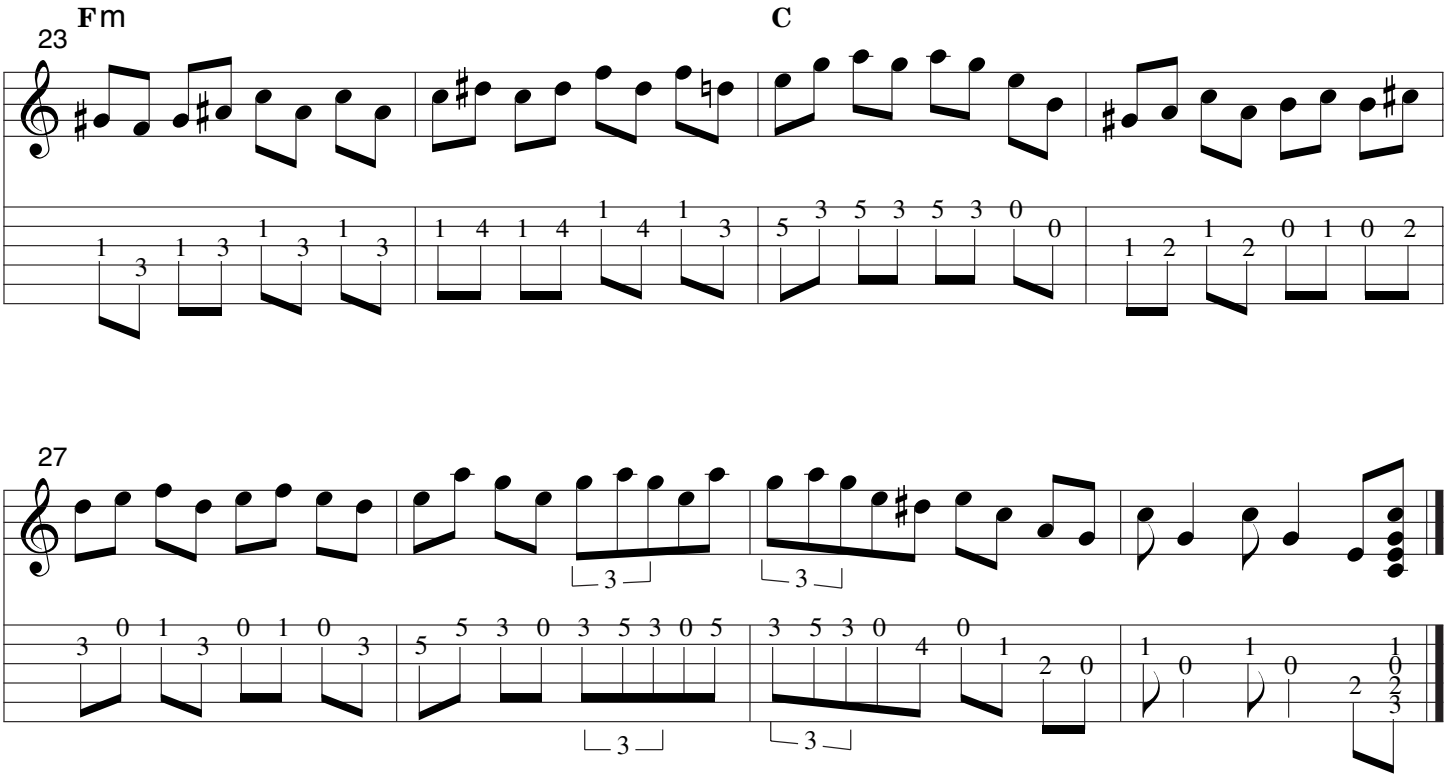
The closed position form allows you to play portions, or the entire chromatic scale from any position on the fingerboard, in essence beginning from any position desired. Just to make it a bit easier to play, we'll move up to fifth position and begin on an A. Note that this form requires that you use the pinky on the left hand to hit the fifth note on each string, and when descending slide down using the index finger.

"Pickin' in the Wind"

"Pickin' in the Wind" is a composition that Mark released on the album of the same name, recorded when he was 14. The second recording, on the *Markology* album, shows his knowledge and use of scales, and includes several uses of the chromatic scale. Notice the way that measures 3 and 4 of the [A-2] section use the chromatic run in a descending pattern. I want you to study this piece, and pull all of the examples of chromatic runs out of it that you can. See where you might be able to apply this type of run in your own music.

Example I: C Chromatic Scale Exercise, First Position



Example II: First position open string Chromatic Exercise; Repeat 8 - 16 times

Example III: Closed position Chromatic Exercise

Example IV: Pickin' in the Wind

Example IV: Pickin' in the Wind (con't)

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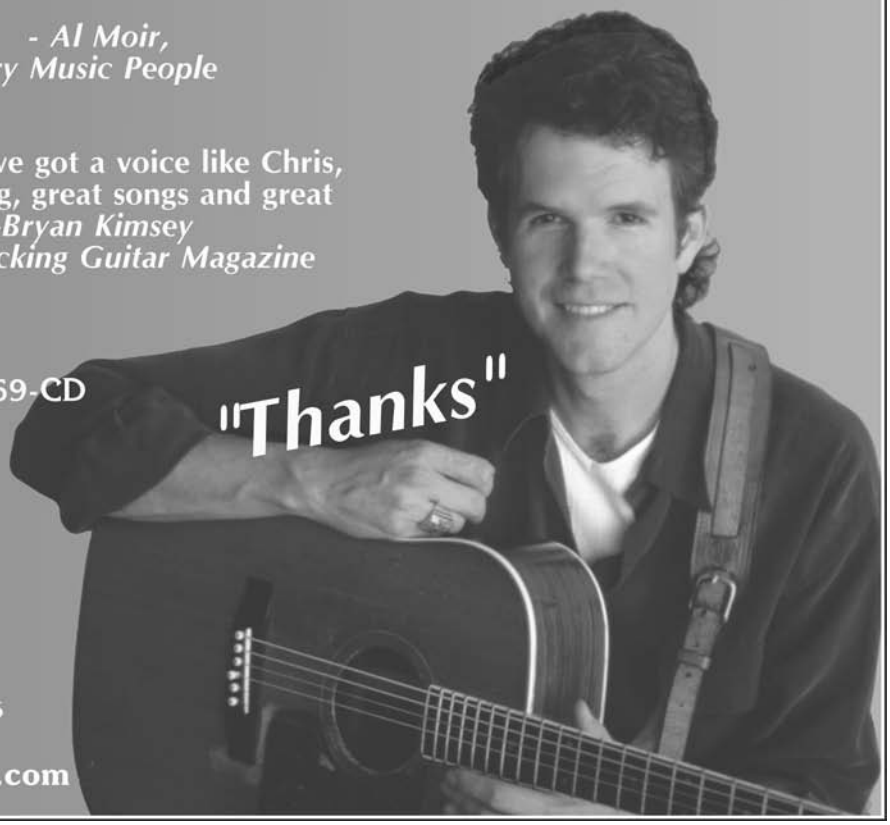

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Gospel Guitar

with Harold Streeter

Just got through reading Herman Melville's (of *Moby Dick* fame) 1849 novel entitled *Redburn*—an autobiography of sorts about his early sailing days. The book contains a chapter about a fellow named Carlo, who plays an instrument called a hand-organ with levers and knobs. Hearing Carlo play caused Mr. Melville to expound on music and musical instruments in general. This is what he had to say:

"Now, music is a holy thing, and its instruments, however humble, are to be loved and revered. Whatever has made, or does make, or may make music, should be held as sacred as the golden bridle-bit of the Shah of Persia's horse, and the golden hammer, with which his hoofs are shod. Musical instruments should be like the silver tongs, with which the high-priests tended the Jewish altars—never to be touched by a hand profane. And there is no humble thing with music in it, not a fife, not a fiddle....for even a Jew's harp may be so played, as to awaken all the fairies that are in us, and make them dance in our souls, as on a moon-lit sward of violets."

Don't know about you, but I don't think anyone has said it better.

The gospel song this time around is Allison Krauss & the Cox Family's "I Know Who Holds Tomorrow" from their 1994 CD. It's a wonderful song featuring two very tasteful breaks that lend themselves to the mood of the song very well. The first is on mandolin, adapted here to guitar, and the other is guitar, shown here just as you hear it on the recording. Both are text book examples of the old musical axiom (at least it should be an old musical axiom), that music doesn't have to be complicated or difficult to play to be good. Of course, what's difficult and what isn't is subjective, but as compared to much of what has appeared in this column, as well as elsewhere in *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*, the two breaks are relatively simple.

Before getting into the breaks, though, there's an intro and a few accompaniment patterns to deal with first. For them to make sense in regard to their placement behind the vocal, a chord chart with numbered measures is included here.

The first tab figure is of the pattern played throughout the 4-bar intro on the recording, and behind subsequent A chord vocal measures. Best way to hold the form is just to add the third string 4th fret to a 2nd fret barre. The chord is called "Aadd9" and it first came into prominence via the recordings of such artists as Gordon Lightfoot and James Taylor. It's hard to tell (for me at least) from the recording if the tab pattern is played with flat pick or in fingerstyle. Either way will get you there, and on the CD for this issue, I just played three down strokes and up stroke for each 4-note unit.

Ditto for the next two tab figures. The first is the pattern heard during the D chord measures with the notes in the tab amounting to a Dadd9 chord, and the second is the pattern played during B7 chord measures 17 and 18, and 29 and 30, as per the numbered measures in the chord chart. The frets shown in the tab for the B7 chord by the way, are just those of a good old garden-variety B7 form. Both the Dadd9 and B7 patterns can be played in the same fashion as the Aadd9 pattern; with three downs and an up.

The last tab figure—before getting into the two breaks—is of the two-measure descending run for the E chord played behind the vocal during measures 19 and 20, the numbered measures in the chord chart. Notice in the second of the two measures that unlike all of the other patterns, the notes are not all played on adjacent strings. One could, I suppose, play the notes in the same manner as the other patterns; that is with three downs and an up, but rather than have to hop over the fourth string, it might be easier to revert to conventional down and up stroke cross picking.

Next are the two breaks. As mentioned, the first is an adaptation of the mandolin break. Due to a couple of minor adjustments stemming from differences in mandolin and guitar thinking, "adaptation" is the key word here. All in all, it's about 95% accurate.

The same is true for the guitar break which appropriately enough, begins with the two pickup notes at the end of the measure marked "guitar pickup." It's not totally accurate either, due to a few notes blurred in the background that required a little guess work, and to the segue between mandolin and guitar in the second E7 measure. What you see is the result of a little massaging between mandolin exit notes and guitar entrance notes.

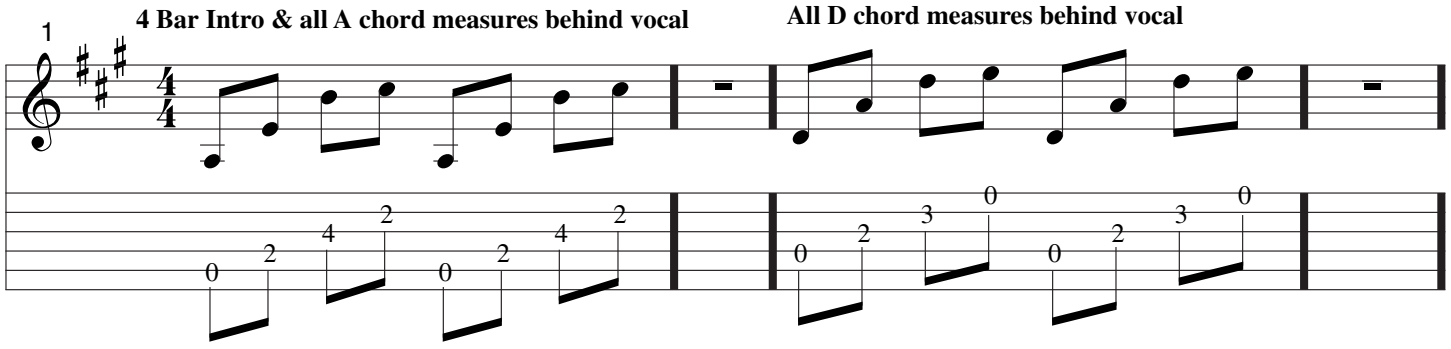
Of interest perhaps are all of the glissandos (slides) occurring in both breaks. In the "mandolin" break for example, there's a double slide on the third string in the measure just after the pickup. The same is true for the guitar break. It includes so many double slides it almost qualifies as a separate art form, but it works, and it works well. Other than that, technique wise, there's not a whole lot to say about either break, due to the piece's moderate tempo and to its relatively low note density. Just about any down and up stroke combination you feel is logical and comfortable will work.

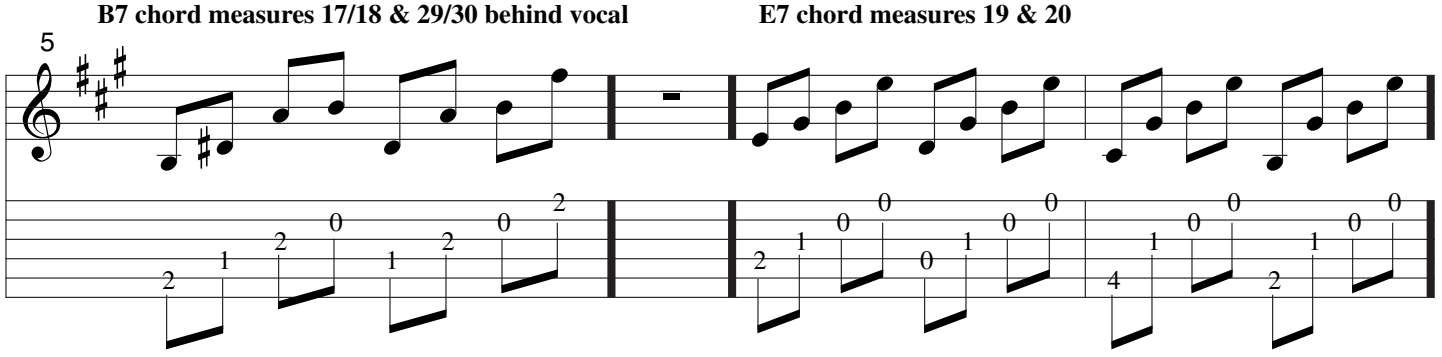
The lick the guitar break ends with kind of spawned an idea for doing a column on tag licks (G runs if you're playing in the key of G). Such material is probably more the province of Joe Carr's—and a very fine job he does of it, but it occurred that tags play an equally vital role in lead playing, whether in Gospel music or other genres. In lieu of a Gospel song, next up then is a column dedicated to tag licks.

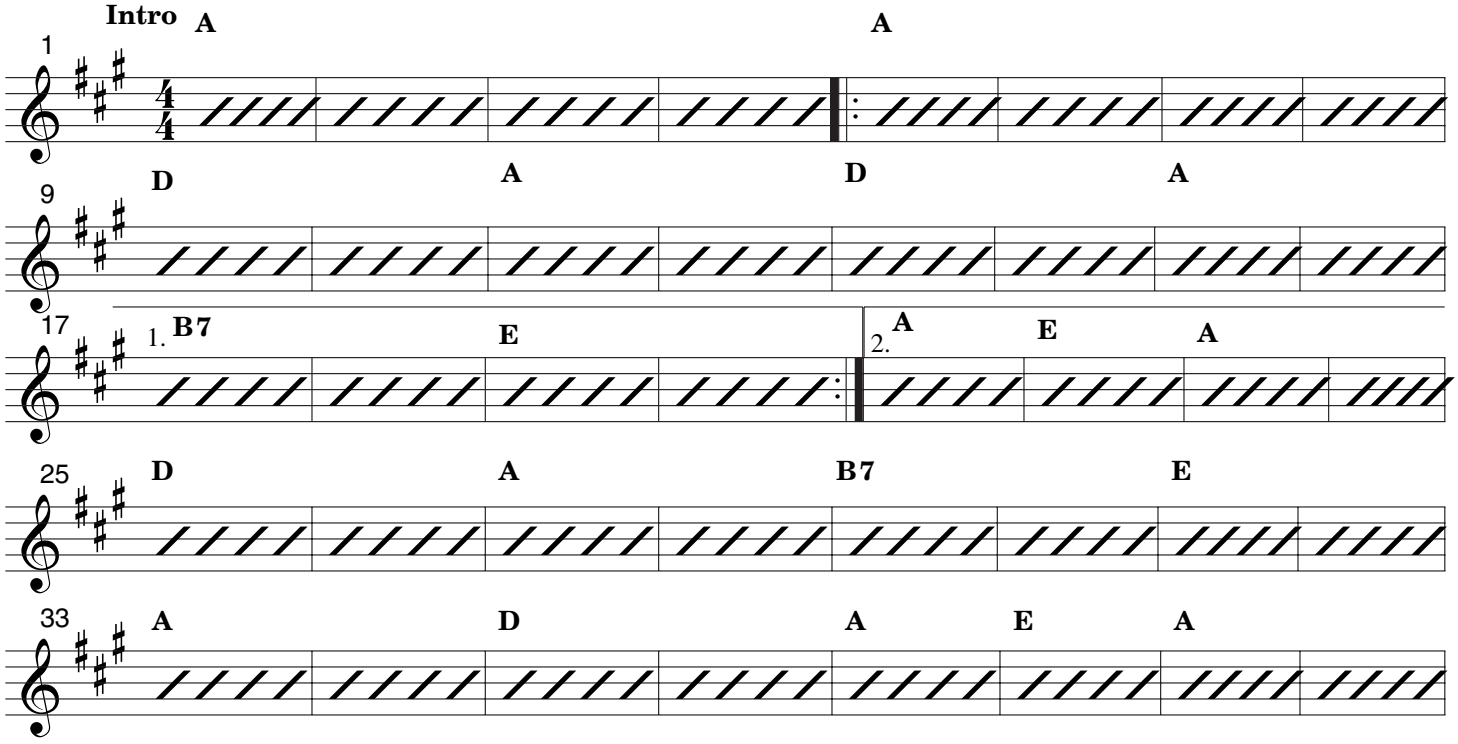
Just a word (commercial) about our web site (www.lewalt.com). If you also play banjo or mandolin, there's plenty of that on there now as well. Just log on to and see what we got.

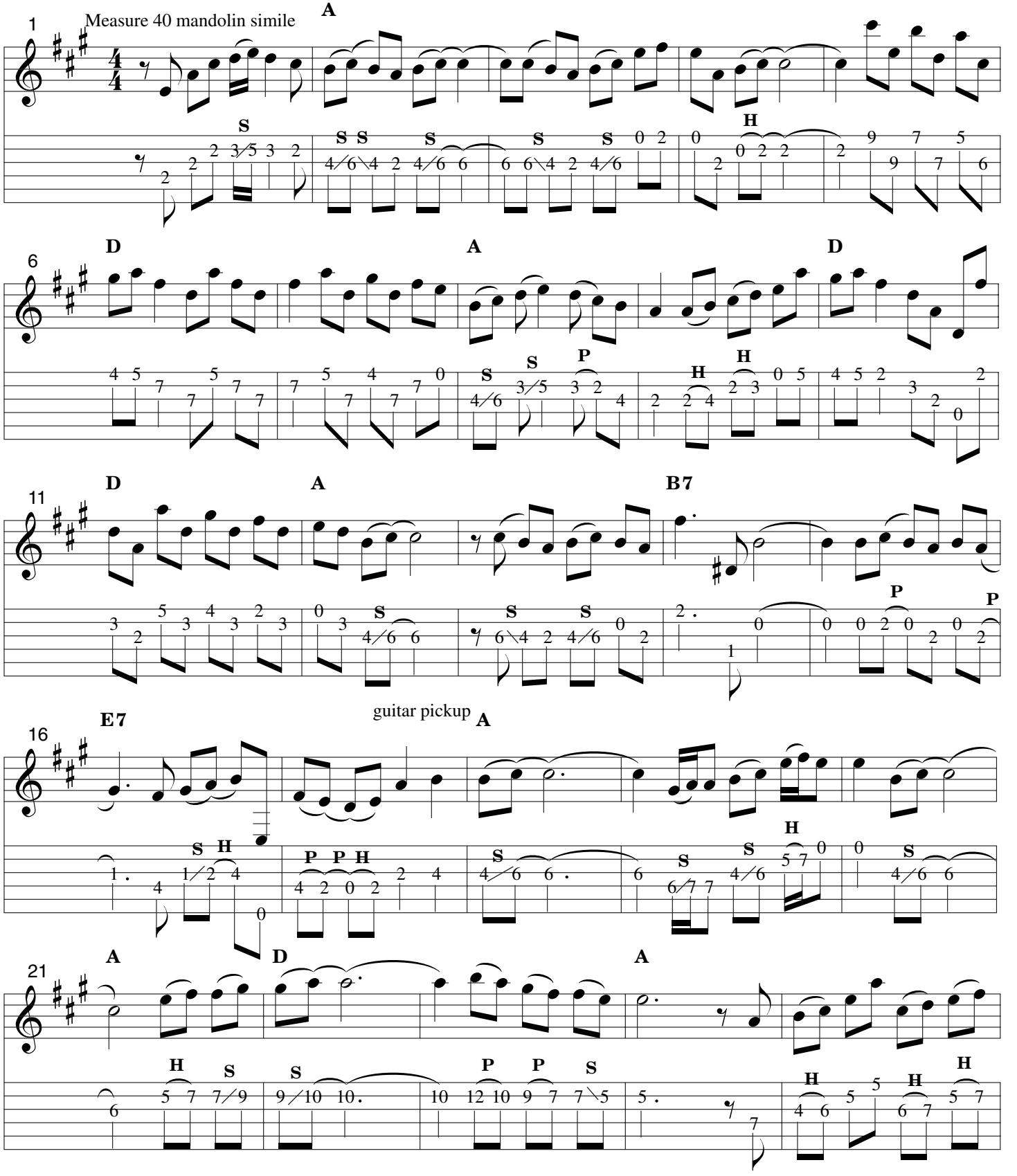
I Know Who Holds Tomorrow

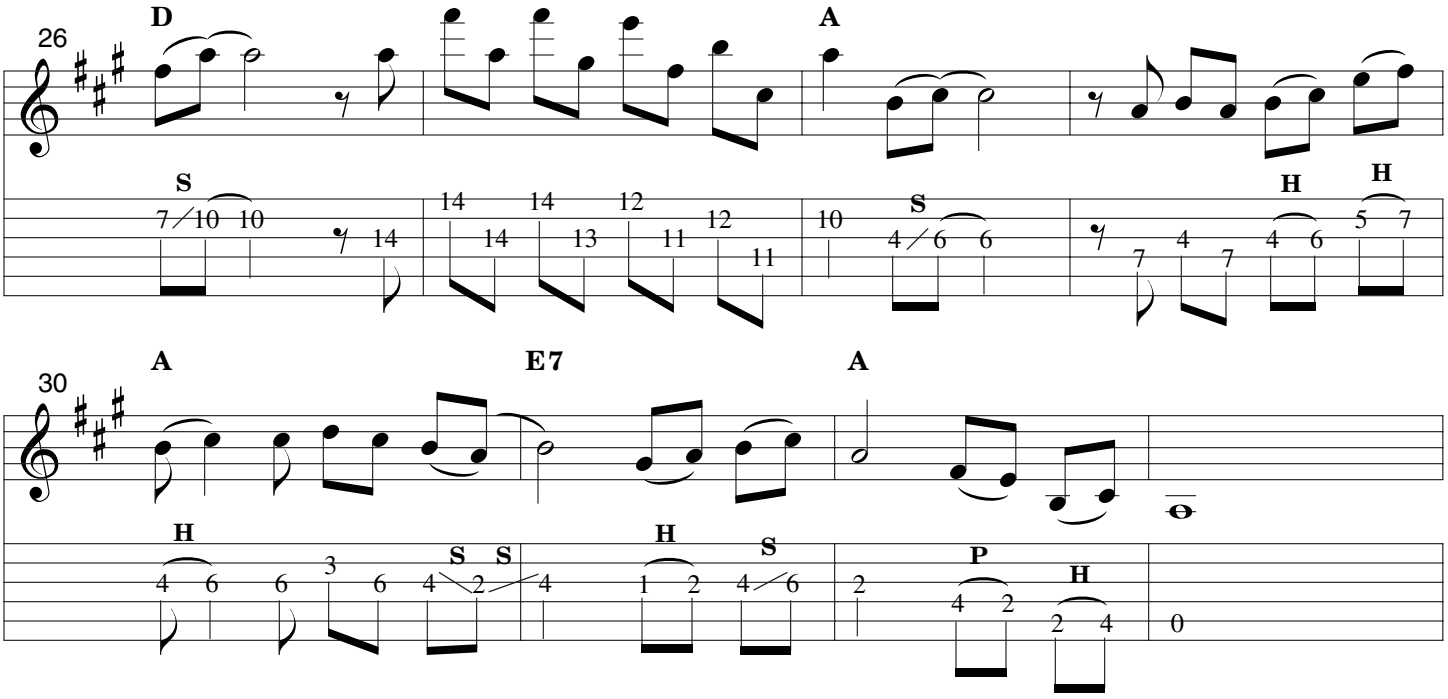
Transcribed by Harold Streeter

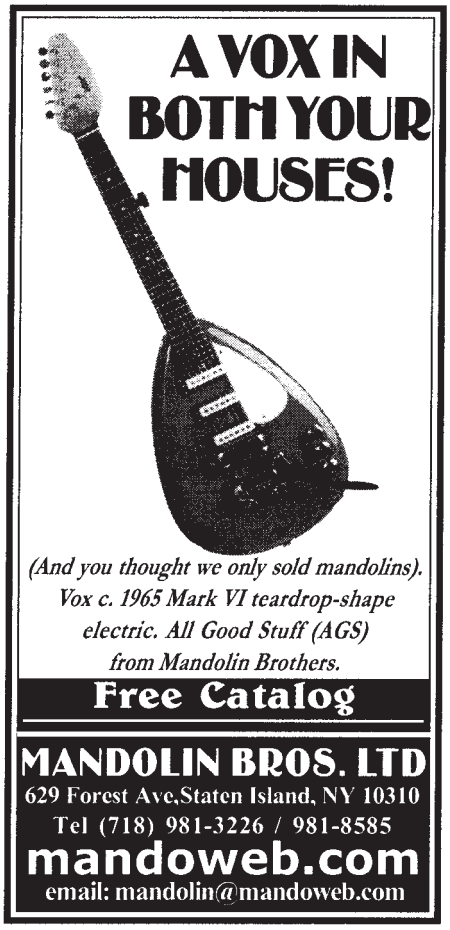






I Know Who Holds Tomorrow (guitar solo)

I Know Who Holds Tomorrow (con't)

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Bill Bay Presents

New Tunes for Flatpicking Gutiar: "Living Where the Healing Waters Flow"

For this month's issue, I wanted to include a flatpicking gutiar solo on a gospel tune. "Living Where the Healing Waters Flow" is one of my favorites.

It is a good ol' foot-stomping camp meeting song which lends itself to many repeated choruses. Not surprisingly, it is also a great tune for parking lot jamming.

The arrangement presented here is very simple, written in the key of G. It is built around basic rhythmic variations on the melody of the tune. I find this to be the best way to go with gospel melodies. The best solo guitar choruses always stay close to the melody line. It should be played at a lively, rousing tempo.

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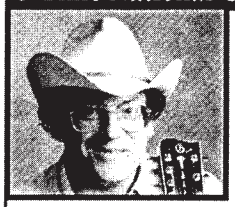

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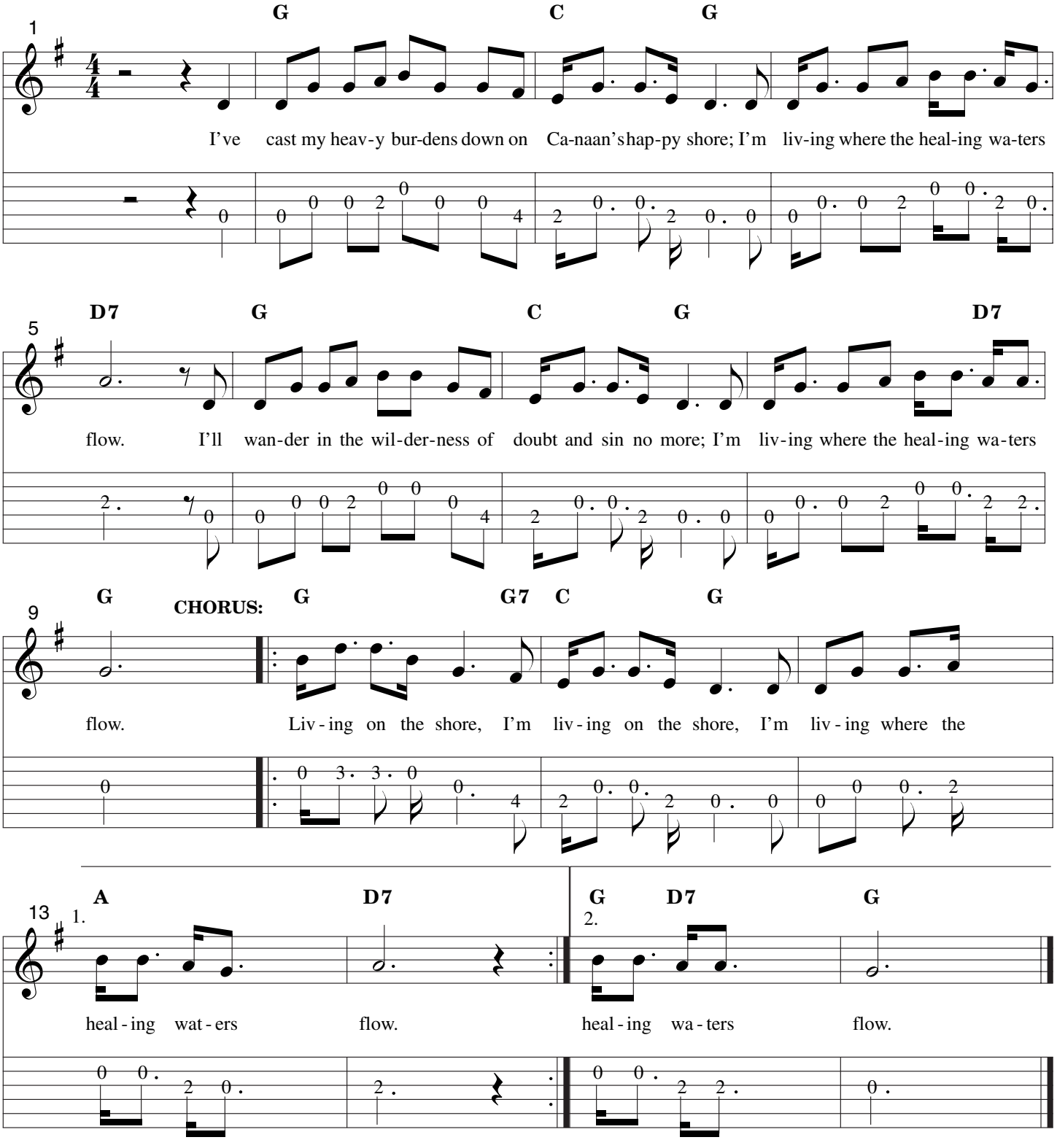
Living Where the Healing Waters Flow

Melody and Lyrics

G C G
I've cast my heav-y bur-dens down on Ca-naan's hap-py shore; I'm liv-ing where the heal-ing wa-ters
D7 G C G D7
flow. I'll wan-der in the wil-der-ness of doubt and sin no more; I'm liv-ing where the heal-ing wa-ters
G CHORUS: G G7 C G
flow. Liv - ing on the shore, I'm liv - ing on the shore, I'm liv - ing where the
A D7 G D7 G
1. 2.
heal - ing wat - ers flow. heal - ing wa - ters flow.

2. With Israel's trusting children,
I'm rejoicing on my way:
I'm living where the healing waters flow.
The cloudy, fiery pillar is my guiding light today;
Chorus

3. My hun-g'ring soul is satisfied,
with manna from above;
I'm living where the healing waters flow.
No more I thirst, the Rock I've found,
That Fount of endless love.
Chorus

4. I'm singing, "Hallelujah";
safely ahcnord is my soul.
I'm living where the healing waters flow.
I'm resting on His promises;
the Blood has made me whole.
Chorus

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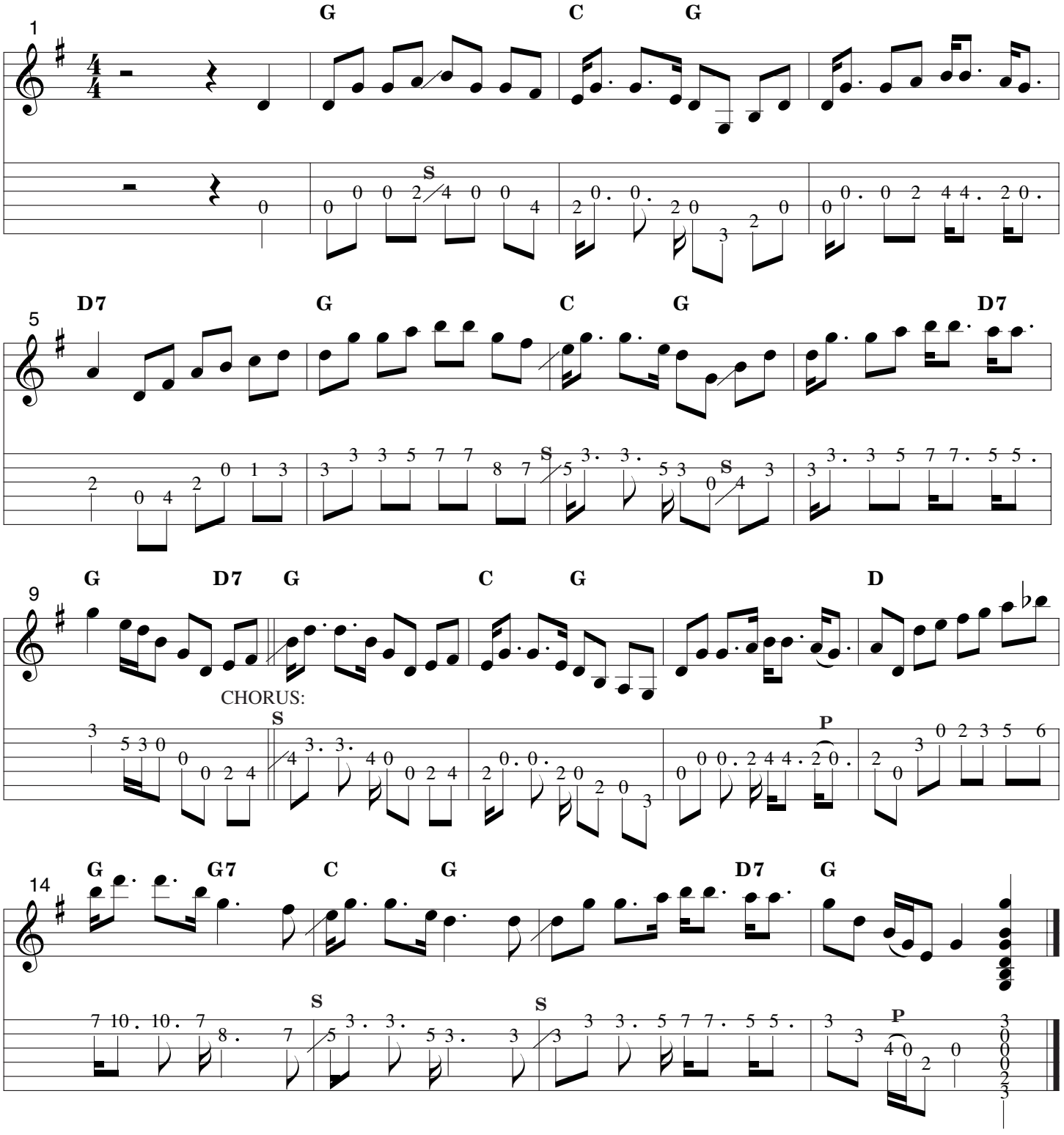
Living Where the Healing Waters Flow

Guitar Solo

Arranged by William Bay

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PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES

by Adam Granger

PETER PICKER PICKED A PAIRA PEPPY POLKAS. . .

Hello plectrists one and all. We're going to stray from our usual focus on fiddle tunes and pick a couple of polkas. Yes, that's right, polkas! You know: "left-right-left-HOP left-right-left-HOP." Now, many of you may associate the polka with schlockiness—you know, Lawrence Welk, soap bubbles, skirts with piping on them. Well, those associations are accurate as far as they go, but I would like to point out that Lawrence Welk, although he often suffered from lapses in taste, always had the best musicians, and I always watched his show, even at my hippest age. Another interesting fact about The Lawrence Welk Show is that it was the first to buck network supremacy: the show was cancelled in the late sixties, at the height of its popularity, because it wasn't youth-oriented enough. Welk subsequently took his sponsor (Chrysler), offered his show for syndication, ended up with more stations than he'd had before, and thus made television history. Mind you, neither of these tunes was in the Welk repertoire, I just thought you'd be interested in that story.

So anyway, if you scan these two tabs you'll see lots of quarter- and half-notes. It's hard to explain how to play a polka. The best thing is for all of you to order the accompaniment CD and listen to what I do with these. If, however, you've lost all your money but a two dollar bill, I'll just say that polkas have lots of clipped notes and are played with gusto and verve (not to mention zip, zing, elan and aplomb, which is also the name of the law firm that represents me). All right, you budding polkaists; give *Redwing* a try:

READING *EASYTAB*

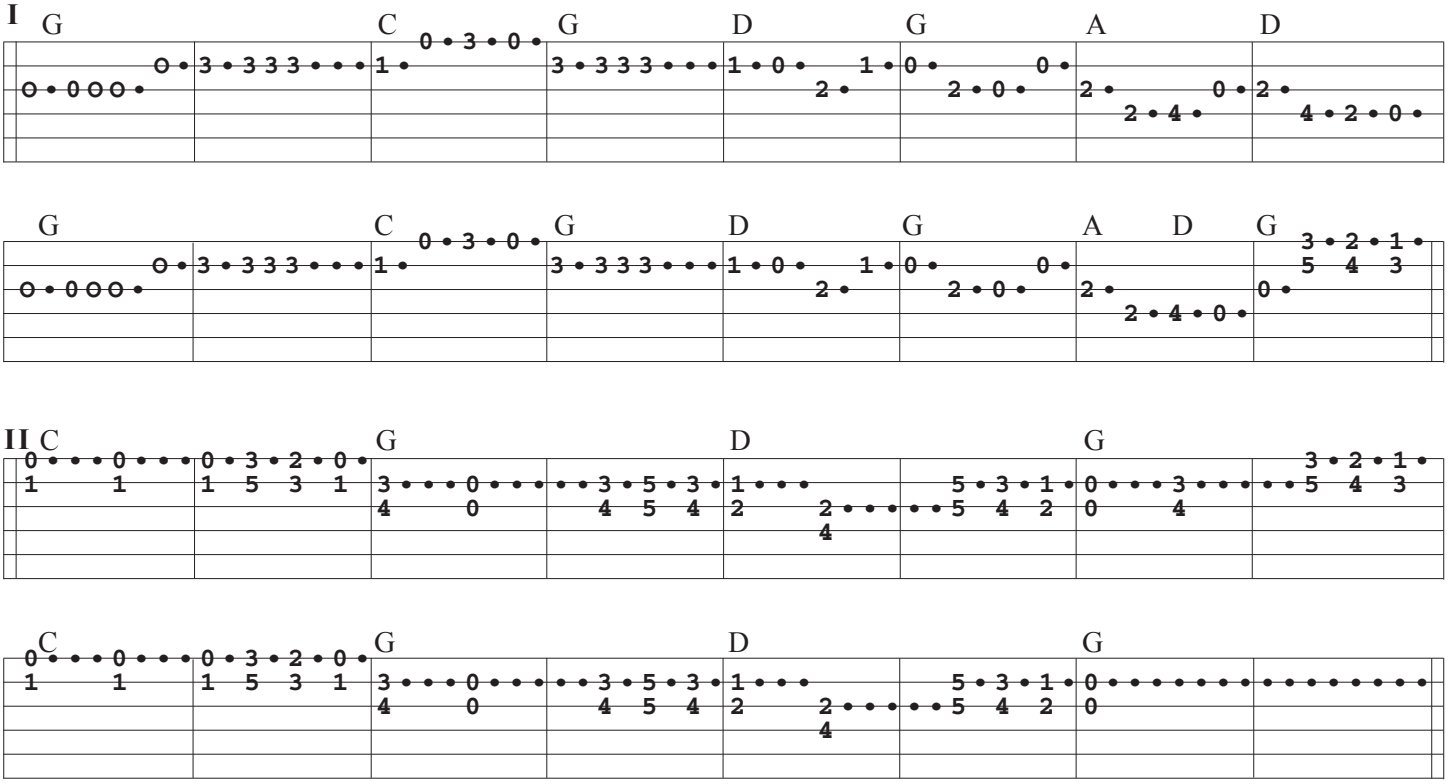
Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests per measure.

FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. **Include rests** in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in synch", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-down-up.

REDWING

KEY: G



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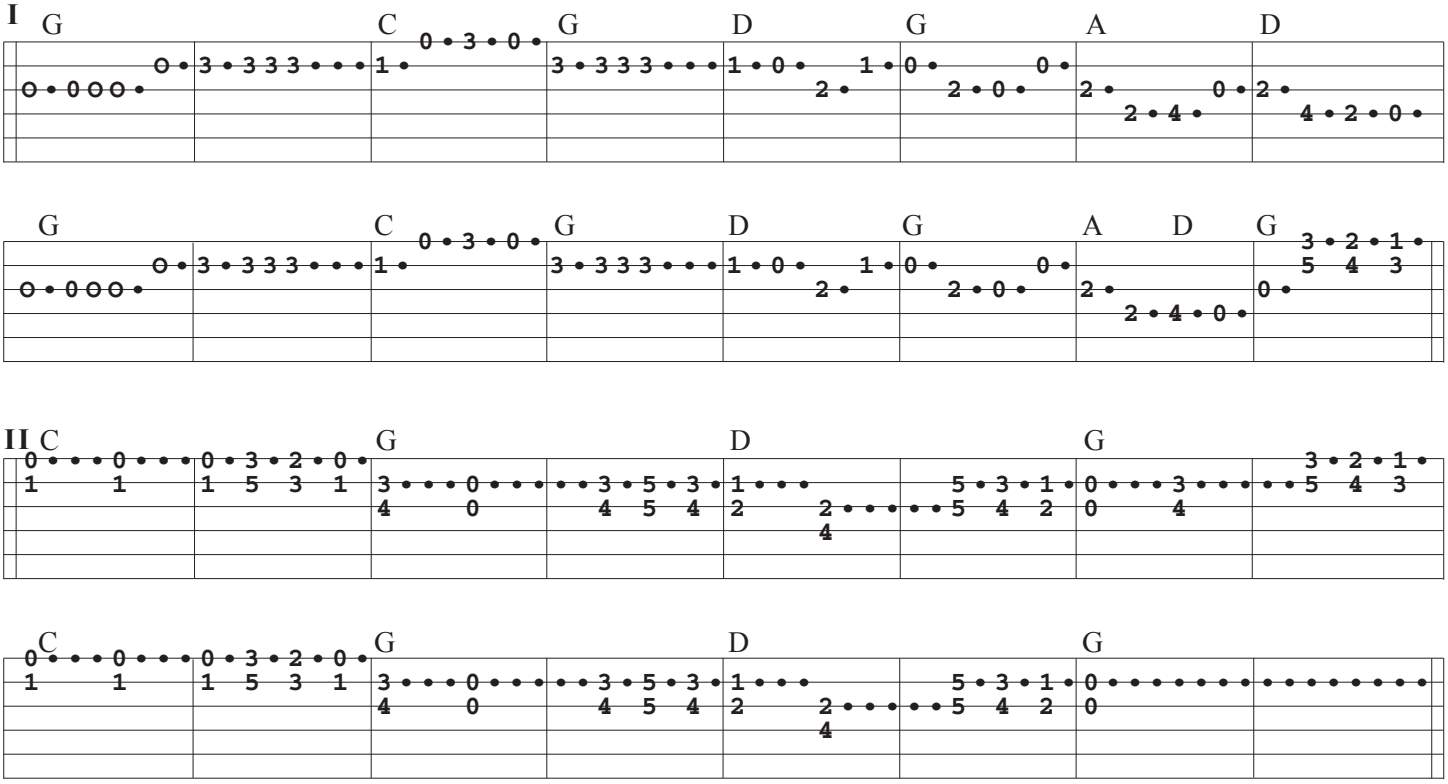


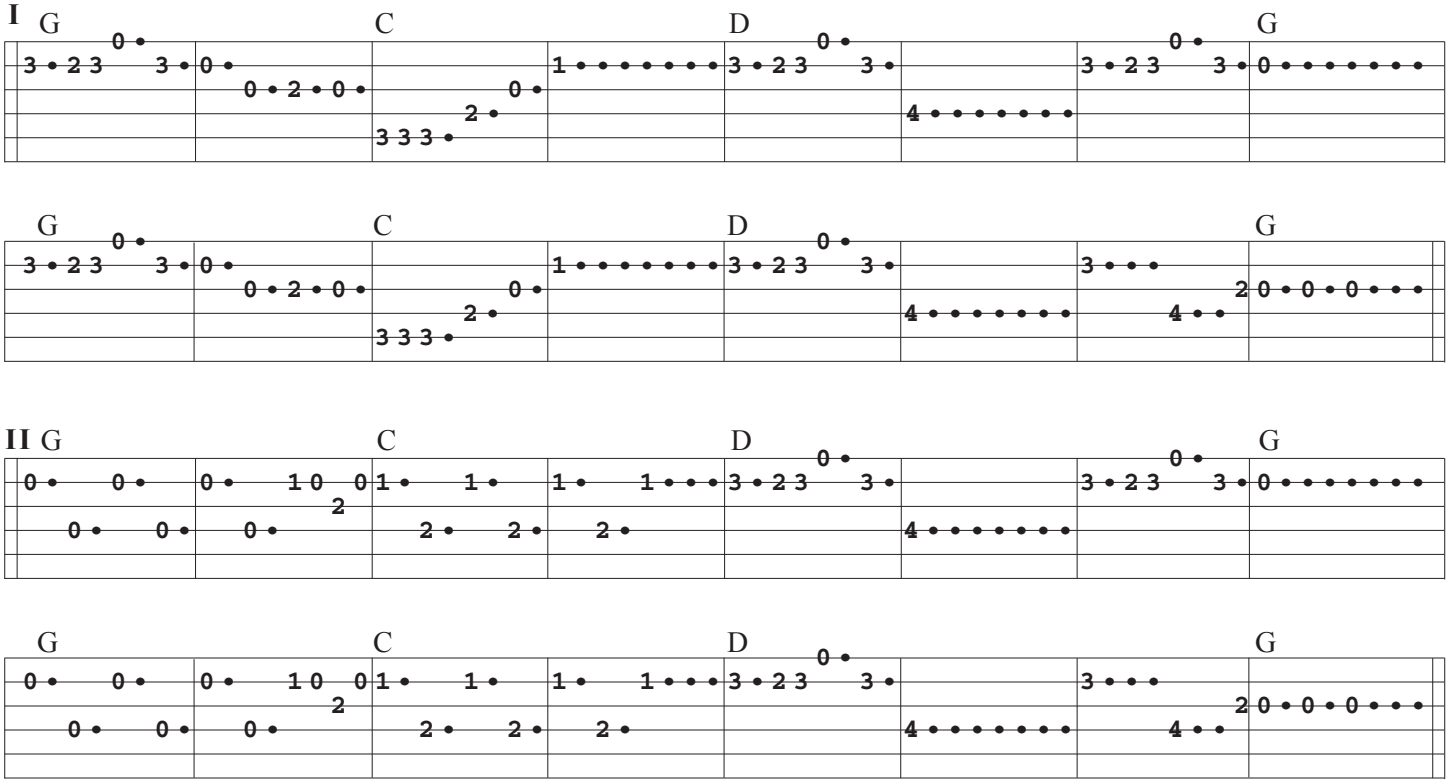
Even if you didn't know its name, you probably recognized *Redwing*'s melody. It's played commonly as an instrumental, but also has two sets of lyrics associated with it: the rather-odd original words about an "Indian maid" named Redwing, and Woody Guthrie's political adaptation, *Union Maid*.

You no doubt noticed a flurry of pairs of notes in the second part. These are legally known as third-interval double-stops—the melody note is paired with a note three steps further up the scale. This stuff is easy and fun, and you will derive a significant sense of sastisfaction from its mastery.

All right, on to *Gary's Polka*. This tune, according to musician/musicologist LeRoy Larson, seems to be a Minnesota native. LeRoy is the only person who's recorded the tune, and, as he didn't know the title at the time, he called it *The Banjo Old Time Polka*.

GARY'S POLKA

KEY: G



Notice that these tunes don't repeat their parts, but are still in the standard (32-bar) form. This is because the parts tag differently (did you catch how the first 75% of each part is repeated?)

Polkas are healthful and fun to play, and it's good form for professional musicians to have a couple ready to go in case people want to dance one. Up here in Minnesota, of course, knowing polkas is as essential as having strings on your guitar. More than one otherwise-good musician has been escorted to the state line for lack of knowing a polka. Oh, and by the way, good old "sock" guitar—swing-style, four chords to the bar (instead of two boom-chicks), damping every chord or every second chord—works great for polka rhythm. Boom-chicks also work, if you evenly modulate the two elements so that neither is more prominent than the other; we're going for a four-chord-chunks-to-the-bar feel.

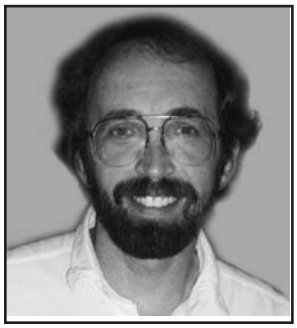
Okay, consider yourselves polka-ized. Next time, we'll return to straight fiddle repertoire. I understand and accept that reels, hoedowns and breakdowns form the essential flatpicking *oeuvre*, but it's nice to throw in the occasional jig, two-step or. . .polka. And while we're talking about it, next time you have a chance at a wedding or wherever to dance a polka, grab your honey and do it! Remember, it's just "left-right-left-HOP left-right-left-HOP. . ."

In the eleven days leading up to the writing of this column, Adam Granger taught 25 lessons, did a recording session, played eighteen sets over a six-day period at the Minnesota State Fair (as part of the Pop Wagner Trio), played two gigs at a downtown Minneapolis restaurant, did two corporate gigs for Polaris Snowmobiles, played a square dance for a bank at a hockey arena in Hudson, Wisconsin, played a nursing home and did a gig dressed as a lumberjack for a trucking firm. He remains, despite his best efforts, a fairly industrious gentleman.

Exploring Bluegrass Guitar

Kicking Off Songs On Guitar

by Steve Pottier



Bluegrass songs are not typically kicked off by the guitar player. More often they're kicked off by the banjo or fiddle player. However, it's handy to know how to do it effectively for the time they turn to you and say "let's have the guitar kick this one off."

Let's take a look at some kick-offs and lead-ins (I call a "lead in" a kick-off that comes later in the song) in the key of G. Two things to look for here: first, the actual kick-off licks. They are simple on purpose. With a kick-off the main thrust of effort is to get everyone in the band started at the same time and tempo. The more complicated the kick-off is, the more likely someone in your band will screw up and not come in at the right time, and the whole start will be weak. So simple is good. Second, you should try to visualize the G chord at the 3rd fret (F shape) as if it were painted on your fingerboard. Most of the G kick-offs will run up to, slide into, or hammer into this shape with either a single note or a double stop.

Pretty soon you will see this chord automatically, as well as any piece of it you may be holding. This is valuable here, but even more valuable as you start to work up the neck.

Examples 1-3 show sample walk-ups to the most common starting notes in the key of G. Listen to banjo kick-offs, and you will hear these same simple walk-ups used a lot. Play them solidly and consistently and your band will love you for it.

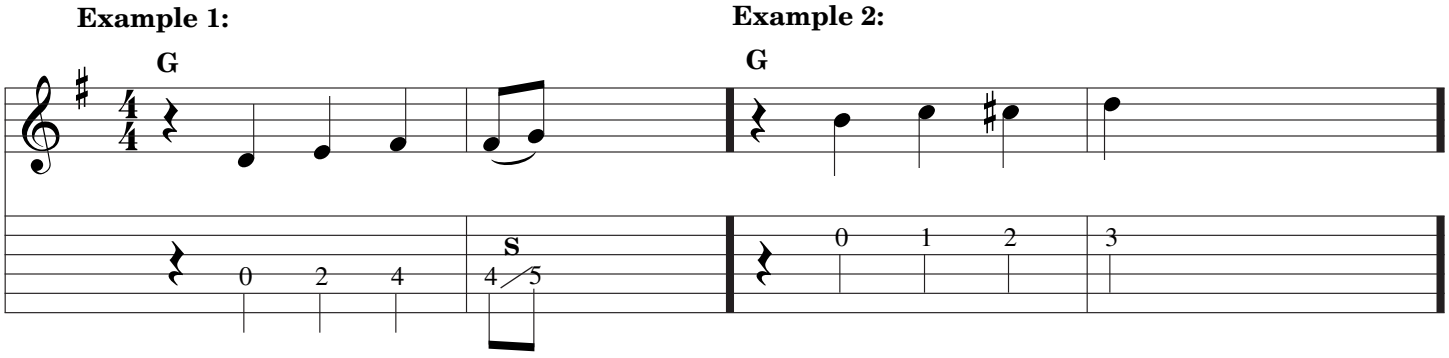
Examples 4-6 spice things up a bit. Starting on an upstroke as Example 4 is like getting a running start. Clarence White liked starting with an upstroke a lot. Example 5 uses the G note on the first string as a pedal point harmony. Notice how you end up at the third fret on the first two strings. Can you see the rest of the G chord (F shape)? Example 6 should be even more obvious. It kind of combines Examples 2 and 3, with the second string being the tenor harmony. How about trying a split string kick-off using Examples 1 and 2? I leave it up to you. Visualize the G chord at the end.

How about a run up instead of a walk up? Look at Examples 7 through 9. Same ideas, more notes. In all three of these examples, note the quarter note instead of an eighth note just before the second measure. You could fill that in with an eighth note, but by leaving out the last eighth note you get more rhythmic and dynamic emphasis on the down beat of the song. Again, notice that the G run does not have a pull off! The rest stroke should be played where indicated (see early FGM columns by Joe Carr and yours truly for a description of the rest stroke).

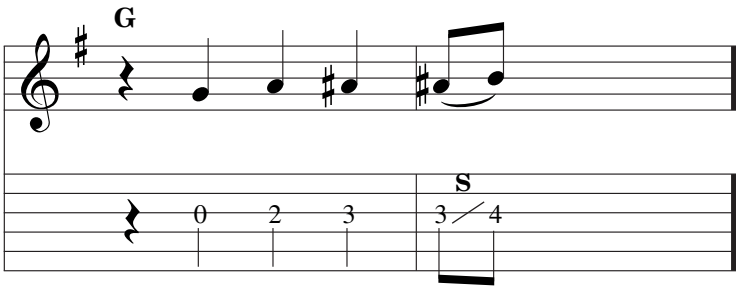
Some melodies come down into the first down beat. Here's some ideas for doing that: You could use example 10 for "Whose Shoulder Will You Cry On?" I start this intro with a downstroke on the offbeat, which breaks the rules, but I think it works fine on this kick-off. Example 11 would be good for "Down Yonder" and Example 12 might be used for "Handsome Molly" or "Mountain Dew." Note that the majority of male bluegrass singers would not be coming down to the high D note...

For more ideas on kick-offs, check out Chris Jones' *Break Time* column. Also, listen for how other instruments start tunes, the banjos, mandolins and fiddles. A lot of those ideas will transfer to guitar easily. And keep it simple!

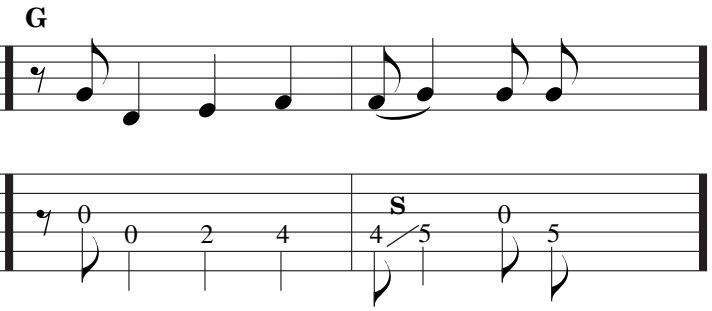
Guitar Kick-Off Examples:



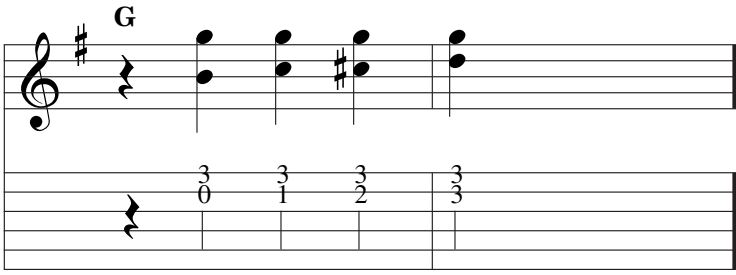
Example 3:



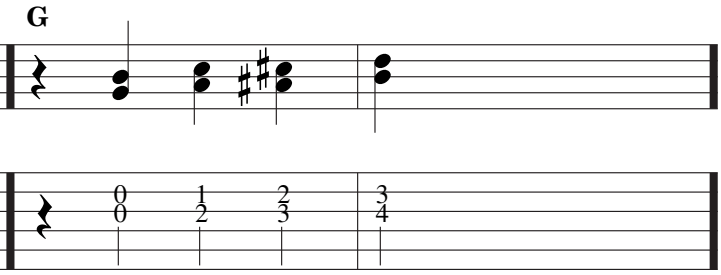
Example 4:



Example 5:



Example 6:



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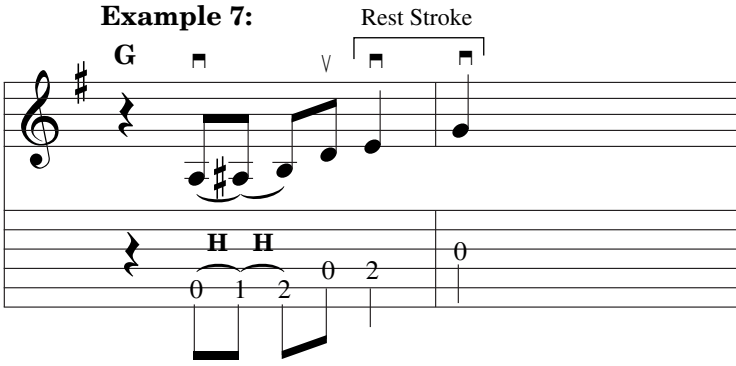

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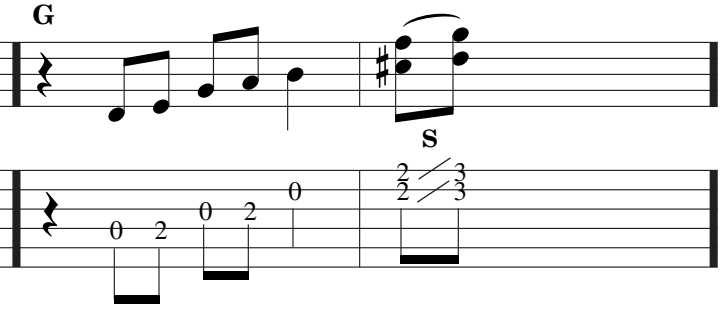

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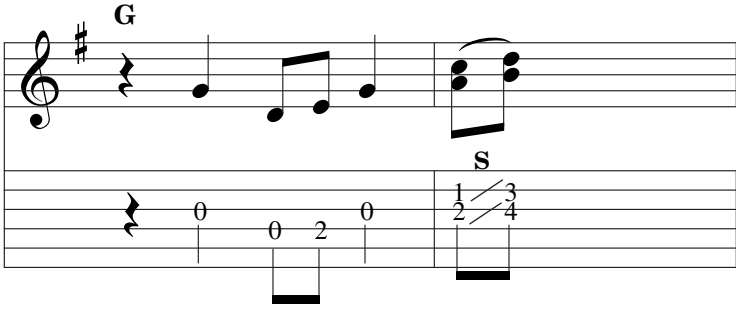

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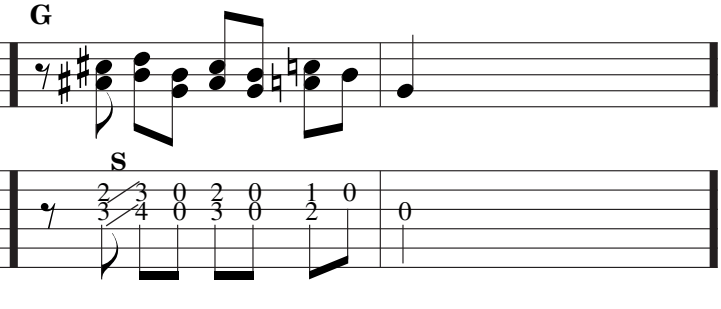

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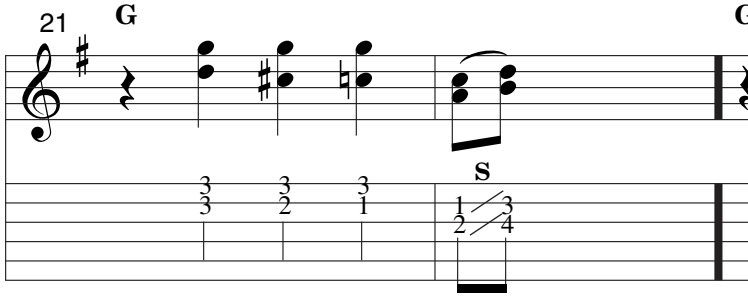

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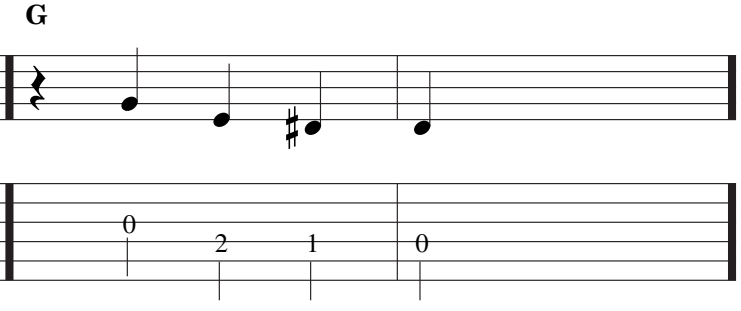
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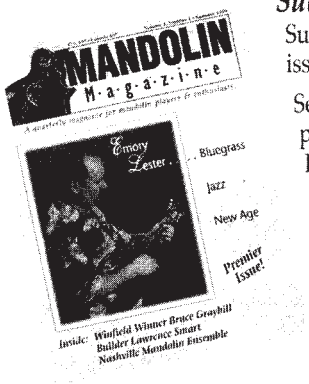

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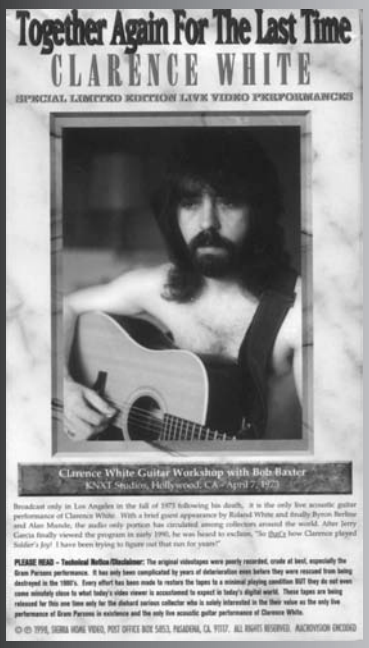
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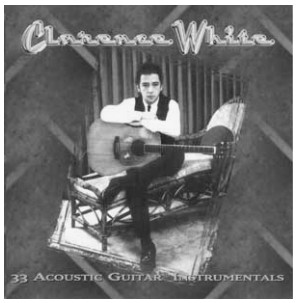

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"Fallen Paradise" and Open Strings

The key of E is a wonderful key for the guitar, with the availability of drone strings 6, 2 and 1 (E, B, E). My approach to "Fallen Paradise" (from Rust Farm *Snows of March*) is influenced by Irish traditional guitar styles, often played in DADGAD tuning, that allow for some open string "drones" with movement on certain strings to imply chord changes, without necessarily shifting to full chord voicings. All the chords presented here feature the sound of the top two strings ringing out in a drone. Listen to how Tim O'Brien's bouzouki in the right channel compliments the sound of the guitar chords in the left channel.

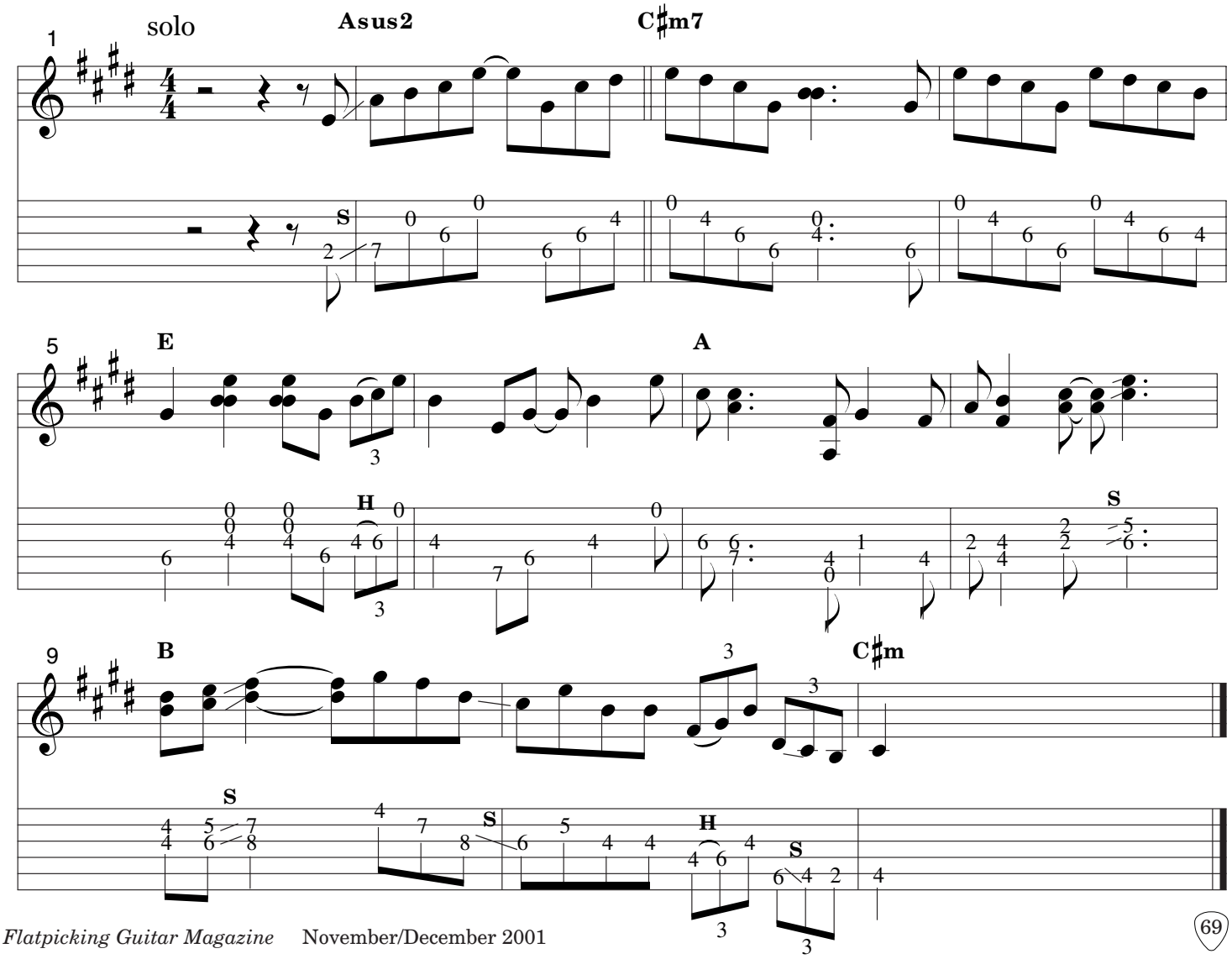
These sounds all work because the chords are all drawn from the key of E, and the E and B notes are the strongest notes from the key. The combination of open strings and fingered notes make some unusual sounds that happen to be fairly easy to play.

The solo uses a floating (playing consecutive scale notes on different strings, like melodic banjo style) and crosspicking approach, combined with some double stops that are similar to a jazz guitar chord/melody style. We created a section "outside of the form" for the solo, in other words, a new section that isn't just the verse or chorus chords- however, it does use chords and a partial progression already within the song, rather than grafting a solo section unrelated to the composition.

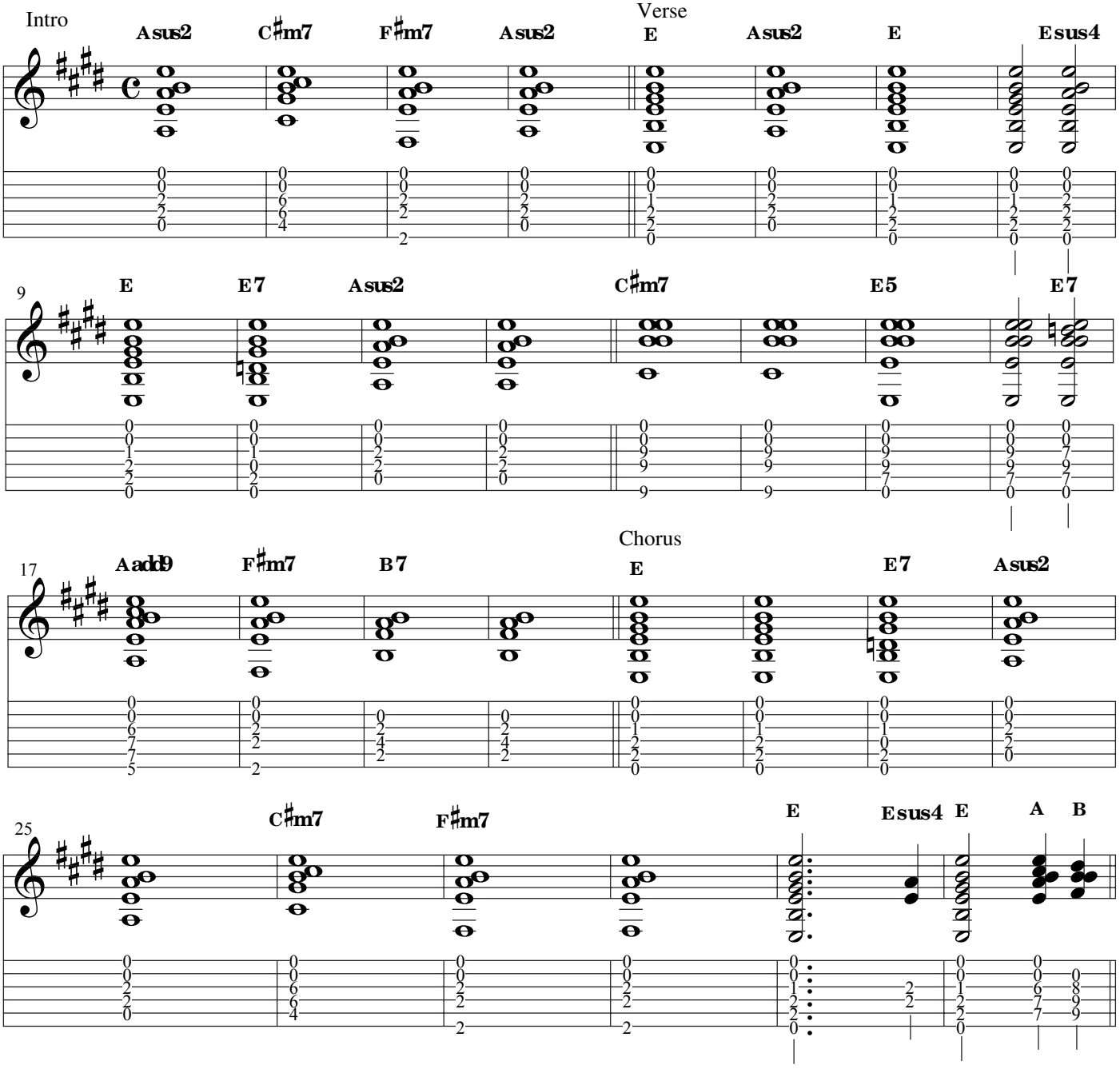
Have fun experimenting with open strings, the sound is so important to so many styles of traditional music.

Fallen Paradise

Arranged by John McGann



Fallen Paradise (chords)



John McGann (www.johnmcgann.com) is a member of Wayfaring Strangers, whose debut CD with Andy Statman, Matt Glaser, Tony Trischka and several guest vocalists has recently been released on Rounder. He is performing around New England and New York with Rust Farm as well as traditional Irish masters Joe Derrane and Seamus Connolly.

New Release Highlight
Kenny and Amanda Smith

by Dan Miller

We are trying something new in our "CD Highlight" column in this issue. For the past 30 issues we have used the "CD Highlight" column to highlight an artist who we have never featured in a previous issue. Therefore, for the past 30 issues we have used this column to not only introduce you to a new CD release, but also introduce you to a player that we had not featured in the past. This summer, at Steve Kaufman's Flatpicking Camp, one of the campers suggested that instead of just focusing on the new players, that we also feature new CDs by players who we have featured in the past and interview the artist regarding each cut of the CD. I thought that was a good idea and so we are going to start doing that here in this issue with an upcoming release from Kenny and Amanda Smith. In the future we will still highlight new artists in this column, however, we will also begin to highlight new releases by artists we have already featured in previous issues.

Kenny Smith is one of my all-time favorite guitar players and his wife, Amanda, is absolutely one of my favorite singers. When Kenny and Amanda brought the rough mix of their new project to the *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* office and we sat down to listen to it, I knew I would like it before I heard the first note because I've liked everything that I have ever heard them do together. Before we put the disc in the CD player Amanda was talking about some of the lyrics she had written to the song "Amy Brown" and she sang the line. The strength and soulfulness of her voice sent chills up my spine. Needless to say, before I even heard the first song, I was predisposed to liking whatever I was about to hear.

What I heard on the 13 cuts that Kenny and Amanda have laid down for this project was better than I could have imagined. I rank this as one of the best recordings I have heard in the past ten years. Amanda's voice is as strong, powerful, and soulful as I have ever heard from any female vocalist. The vocal harmonies are superb. Kenny's guitar work, as always, is smooth, fluid, lyrical, tasteful, and exciting. Although it is primarily a vocal album, Kenny's lead guitar work is displayed on nearly every tune. The songwriting and song selection is wonderful. There are twelve vocals and one instrumental. There are two gospel songs, one old-timey song, one swing tune, several up-tempo hard-driving bluegrass tunes, and a few slow and tender songs. The CD displays a great musical diversity, yet it all fits together nicely and thus the overall project is very cohesive.

During the past few years, while Kenny and Amanda were planning and then recording this project, every time I saw them I asked "how is it going." Typically Kenny would say, "We are still looking for more material." After listening to the CD, I found out that it wasn't that they didn't have material to choose from, it was that they were very careful about choosing the right material. They wanted to provide a variety of music that would be representative of what they like to perform, yet also have the music fit together to form an integrated project. After listening to it, I would say that they succeeded in their effort.

Kenny says that the planning for this project started shortly after Sugar Hill records released *Studebaker* back in 1997. After *Studebaker*, he did not want to do another "guitar project." He says that he was more interested in doing a "bluegrass project that would feature Amanda." Although Kenny has been a member of the Lonesome River Band for the past six years, he and Amanda have performed together with their own band five or six times a year at various bluegrass venues and ten to twelve times a year at churches and gospel venues. Since their's is primarily a vocal show, they wanted the new recording to reflect that. Kenny also wanted to display his songwriting talents. Kenny says, "Writing songs is my favorite thing to do now. When I'm sitting around the house, I enjoy writing songs more than anything." Kenny has three of his original songs on this recording. One, "Amy Brown," was written with Amanda, another, "Because of You" was written with Wayne Winkle, and the third, "Mary Goes Around," was penned with Ronnie Bowman.

Recording for this new project began last March at the BurntHill Studio in Clarksburg, Maryland, owned and operated by Ronnie Freeland. Ronnie, who was the engineer on *Studebaker*, engineered this project as well. To help them out on the project, Kenny and Amanda brought in Galax mandolin champ Ronald Inscore on mandolin, Jason Moore on bass, IBMA "fiddle player of the year" Ron Stewart on fiddle, and Kenny's brother, and "national banjo champion," Sonny Smith on banjo. Wayne Winkle also adds some harmony vocals. Ronald Inscore has been playing gigs with Kenny and Amanda since 1995.

Instead of pitching this project to a label, Kenny and Amanda have decided to put it out on their own label in order to maintain control of every aspect of the recording, producing, distributing, marketing, and advertising. They will be primarily marketing the CD on a web site that should be up and running by the time this project is released in late December

or early January. They will take orders over phone, email, the website, or regular US mail.

When Kenny and Amanda came by for the interview we listened to the CD together and they provided details about every tune. We listened to a rough mix that had not yet been arranged in the final sequence. Here are some details on every tune in the order that we listened to them:

"Amy Brown" — This is a song that was written by Kenny and Amanda. We have included this track on the companion CD for this issue, so you can listen to it for yourself. If you like this one, you will love the entire project.

Going into the project Amanda wanted to sing a "cheating" song. Kenny challenged her to write one herself. Amanda came up with the concept and a few lines of the song and Kenny wrote the rest. Kenny provides a wonderful guitar solo in "drop D" tuning which we have transcribed in this issue. If you like this solo, it is just the tip of the iceberg as far as Kenny's guitar work on this recording.

"Because of You" — This song was written by Kenny and Wayne Winkle. Kenny sings the lead and baritone vocals on this one with Wayne Winkle providing the tenor part. Kenny says, "I wrote this one about why somebody would not cheat." Perhaps it is his answer to Amanda's accusations in "Amy Brown."

"Only Sailors" — This is a song penned by Nashville songwriter Shelton Feazell. Kenny and Shelton are friends and Kenny remembers that Shelton had pitched this song to Claire Lynch back when Kenny was in her band. Claire didn't record the tune, but Kenny had liked it and decided to include it on this project. Shelton, who formerly sang bass and played bass with Doyle Lawson, wrote this tune after going through a divorce. Kenny sings lead here and Amanda adds the vocal harmony.

"Hung My Head and Cried" — This is an old Flatt & Scruggs tune that was performed on their show by Billy Powers, the "singing bus driver." Although Flatt & Scruggs performed it as a slower number, Kenny and Amanda have turned it into a hard-driving bluegrass tune here. Amanda sings a very powerful lead part and Kenny sings harmony. This is one of their favorites to do when they give a live performance.

"Winter's Come and Gone" — Gillian Welch wrote this old-timey number and Amanda sings it beautifully. This is another one that sent shivers down my spine—just incredible. This was one of my favorites. Amanda said she chose this song because she liked the old-timey sound. Kenny takes a great guitar break on this one.

"It's Over" — This one was written by Kenny's favorite songwriter, Wayne Winkle. Kenny said that Wayne had sung this song for them about two years ago when it still wasn't quite finished. He adds, "When we heard it, we just loved it. This is my favorite song on this project." This is a slower number sung by Amanda.

"Will I See You" — This is a gospel tune that was written by Kenny's cousin, Richard Gulley, after his uncle had died. It is a slow tune where Kenny and Amanda split the lead part and sing incredible harmony on the chorus. I liked the vocal harmonies on this song the best. Amanda said that this was her favorite tune on the recording.

"Slowly But Surely" — This is an old country song which was performed by Merle Haggard and Bonnie Owens. Several years ago Kenny and Amanda met David Caudell, of Fries, Virginia, at a jam session and David was singing a lot of songs that they had never heard before. They came to find out that David had an immense record collection with many old and obscure recordings. When they were searching for material for this project they asked David if he knew any old songs that would fit them. David made a tape of about 20 tunes and Kenny and Amanda used three of them on this CD. This is a "call and response" style song where Kenny and Amanda share the lead vocal.

Another interesting aspect of this song is the percussion track that was laid down by engineer Ronnie Freeland. Ronnie, in a former life, was a drummer who went by the name Ronnie Buck. Before this song was recorded Ronnie asked Kenny if he wanted a click track. Kenny said he didn't want a click, but asked Ronnie if he would lay down some percussion to use in lieu of a click. There was no drum kit, so Ronnie got out his brushes and laid down a percussion track using the brushes on an Olive Garden take-out sack. Kenny liked the sound, so the track stayed on the recording.

"River of Regret" — This is another song that was on the tape given to Kenny and Amanda by David Caudell. It is a country song which was performed by June Stearns. June did it as a slow number, but Kenny and Amanda have sped it up. Kenny said that he liked the chord progression on this one. Amanda sings both the lead and the tenor vocal here. Kenny adds the baritone vocal. Ronnie Buck plays percussion on the Olive Garden sack on this one as well.

"Mary Goes Around" — Kenny and Ronnie Bowman wrote this song back in 1995. As you might guess, it is about a girl that likes to "run around." Kenny says that this was the first vocal song that he ever wrote. Kenny sings lead on this one. Amanda said that this is her sister Kristina's favorite song.

"Come Along Jody" — This is the only instrumental tune on the project. It was written by Tex Logan and performed by fiddler Fletcher Bright of the Dismembered Tennesseans of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Kenny says, "The biggest G-run in the world has its debut on this tune." Kenny's great rhythm guitar work really caught my attention on this one.

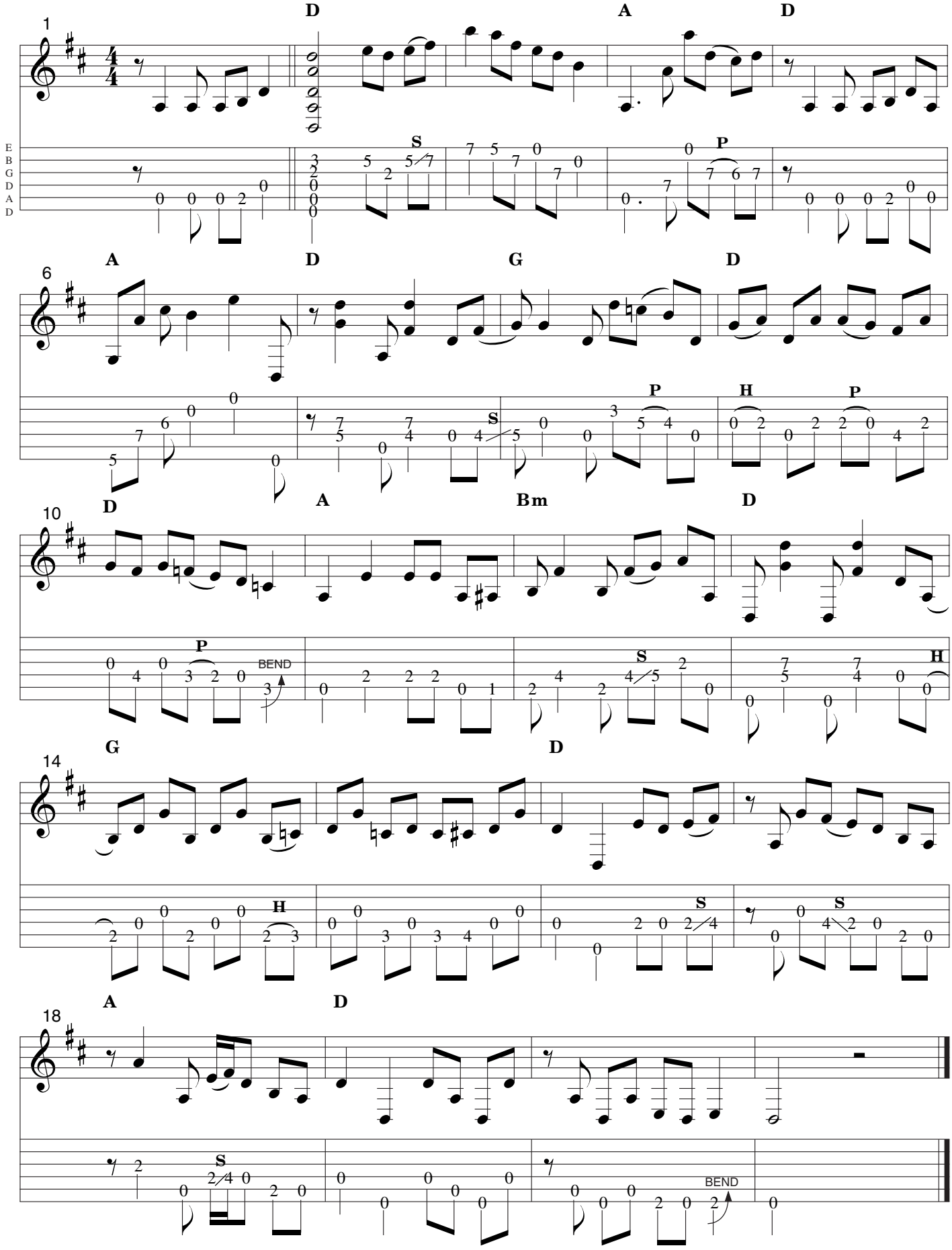
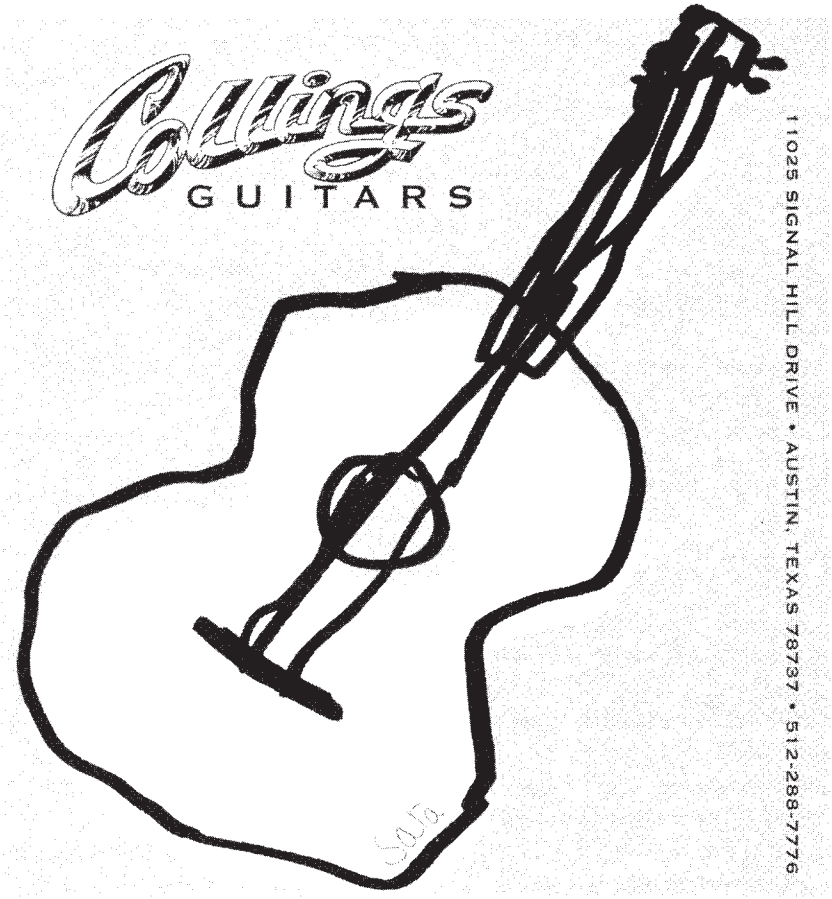
"Nancy Jane" — This swing song was written by Tommy Duncan, the lead singer for Bob Wills' band. It is another song that was recommended by David Caudell. Kenny sings lead on this one and says that he has enjoyed playing swing tunes ever since being with Claire Lynch's band back in the early 90s. Claire always did two or three swing numbers during each set. Once again Ronnie Buck adds the Olive Garden sack to this one and during the recording session the musicians discovered that deer like swing. After providing his rockin' bass part on this tune Jason Moore looked out of the large picture window in the studio and saw that eight deer had moved in close and were staring back at him.

"Crying for Crumbs" — This is a slow gospel number that Kenny and Amanda like to perform in church. Amanda sings lead here—beautifully done.

I give this CD my highest recommendation. To sign up in advance for this recording, send Kenny an email at kennygtr@swva.net.

Amy Brown

Drop D Tuning

Arranged by Kenny Smith
Transcribed by Brad Davis



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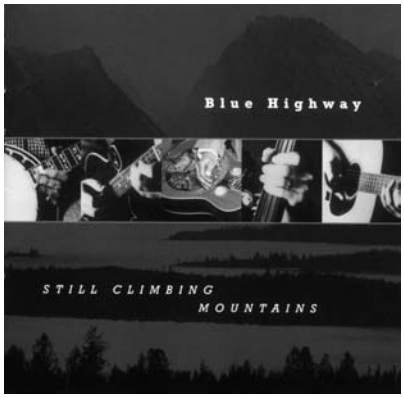


Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

It's always good to get the latest Blue Highway release. You know you're going to hear professional bluegrass with a group of excellent singers and pickers doing great songs. And it's a consistent sound, too. With the exception of banjo players (and they're back to original banjoist Jason Burleson), the group has remained virtually unchanged since day 1. In these days of lead singers with ever shifting band members, it's great to hear a band that's stuck together and grown together.

Blue Highway continually challenges themselves. *Still Climbing Mountains* is composed entirely of band member's compositions. And, wow! There are some great tunes here! The title cut is one. The smokin' instrumental "Monrobro" is another as is "Buck Hill." My favorite, gospel, is well represented with the bluesy "Mountain of the Lord" and "The Seventh Angel" with their powerful messages. There are several songs of old times gone by and the lessons learned from them—"Uncle Fred," "Boulder City Dam," and "Union Man." All the songs have solid, mature themes. Instrumentally, Blue Highway covers the ground from straight bluegrass to blues to country-influenced harmonies, all done in impeccable style.

What about the band's flatpicker, Tim Stafford? What's his role here? I think flatpickers will be well pleased. Stafford takes several killer solos, always appropriate to the song. With some players, you know what they're going to play before they play it, but Stafford covers it all from screaming Kenny Smith type floating solos to some very pretty crosspicked breaks. His guitar doesn't stand out and call out for attention, but is an integral part of the band, doing a call and response with other instruments on "Boulder City Dam" and providing subtle but supportive fills throughout. As with other Blue Highway albums, Stafford's rhythm guitar plays an important role in driving the band, filling and creating holes in the sound, and providing a lot of punch especially during the come-ins after a stop-time.

Still Climbing Mountains is an excellent album filled with great songs and great playing. It's easily one of the better CD's I've heard in the past several months. And I've heard a lot of 'em.

Doc Watson at Gerdes Folk City
Doc Watson
Sugar Hill SUG-CD 3934

Reviewed by David Moultrup

Try to imagine getting on a bus in rural North Carolina, in 1962, to go to New York City, to play a folk gig at a pizza joint. Try to imagine doing it alone, not to mention blind. Good luck with trying to really get it. It stretches the imagination, doesn't it? This recording documents that historical moment. And what a moment it was. The courage and determination necessary to pull off that adventure are at the core of the music of Doc Watson.

I do have to admit that I'm biased. I am a member of the vast army of folks who's consciousness was raised by Doc's playing from the get go, and who's playing is so thoroughly indebted to Doc that it's hard to avoid gushing. But this CD is special, out of all of Doc's legacy. For the vast majority of us who didn't have the opportunity to be at Gerde's in '62, this gives us the chance to get a glimpse of the music, and maybe even a bit of the atmosphere.

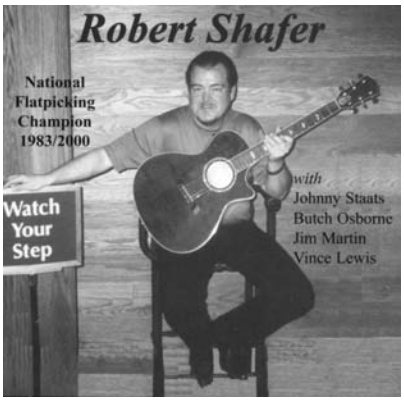
The tunes range from traditional ones like "The House Carpenter" and "Little Sadie," to composed ones like "Blue Smoke" and "Tragic Romance." Most of the tunes are finger-picked, which Doc chose to do with the idea that it would give more support to his singing, and make it easier for the audience to digest. It's nice to hear Doc's mandolin playing on "Liberty," since mandolin has not been a regular for him for a long time.

All of the ingredients that have contributed to Doc being the icon that he is are evident here. His warmth, genuineness, and engaging style are supported by his virtuoso playing. His choice of material ranges from traditional and timeless classics to modern pop hits. His singing is rich and soulful. Doc's maturity comes through on every level.

The booklet with this CD is a wonderful bonus. Peter Siegel's inspired and inspiring liner notes wonderfully document the history of this engagement. The text is supported by pictures from the period which are fun to have.

This CD is a very special snapshot of Doc's personal history and the history of folk music. But it stands on its own as well, as engaging music sure to delight listeners.

Watch Your Step
Robert Shafer



Reviewed by David McCarty

When you've won the "Big W" twice, you have nothing left to prove. When you first win Winfield in 1983 and then come back 17 years later to win again in 2000, you really have nothing left to prove. But for Robert Shafer, it's all about the music, not personal fame or contest glory, in the end.

So on his second CD, Shafer presents a relaxed portrait of himself as a guitarist at ease with many styles of flatpicking guitar. From the perky, contestesque opening cut to the subtle waltzes appearing later on the CD, he seems in total command of his instrument at all times. Professionally, he splits his time between playing flatpicked acoustic guitar and performing on a Fender Telecaster with a popular electric country band, and that dichotomy is apparent in his technical command here. Shafer's playing ranges from sweet, melodic melodicism on tunes like the crooner tune "Mona Lisa" to hot chicken-pickin' type licks on the faster tunes.

Shafer also indulges his passion in the European equivalent of flatpicking, Gypsy jazz guitar. He races effortlessly through the demanding changes of "La Gitana," and also immaculately executes Raul Reynoso's beautiful original tune "Matelot" with enough skill to impress most fans of the hot swing guitar style pioneered in the 1930s by the legendary Django Reinhardt.

Joining Shafer here is mandolin superstar Johnny Staats, whose band Shafer plays in, and Butch Osborne on banjo. Staats blazes through his solos here, especially on the swing-tempoed tunes. Throughout the CD, there's always a strong sense of cohesion and style that makes this sound more like a well-traveled band instead of a solo CD project.

Shafer is a guitar player of immense talent, and on "Watch Your Step" he gets to display nearly every facet of it. For traditional flatpicking fans, check out his striking renditions of the Kaufman Klassik "Clarinet Polka" and that good old "Bill Cheatam." From the genius of mandolin legend Jethro Burns, he resurrects "Taterbug Rag" in a striking harmony introduction. And from the contest circuit, he rounds things out with hot lick-driven versions of "Durang's Hornpipe" and "Sweet Georgia Brown."

There are faster players than Robert Shafer and players with deeper tone, but few players combine all the skills and techniques of great flatpicking in one package better than this friendly, good-humored West Virginia native. If it's great flatpicking guitar you love, you'd better "Watch Your Step."

Song list: Tennessee Wagoner, La Gitana, Clarinet Polka, Mona Lisa, Bill Cheatam, Watch Your Step, Charmaine, Matelot, Taterbug Rag, Evelyn’s Waltz, Durang's Hornpipe, Dorothy's Waltz, Sweet Georgia Brown.

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by Steve Kaufman
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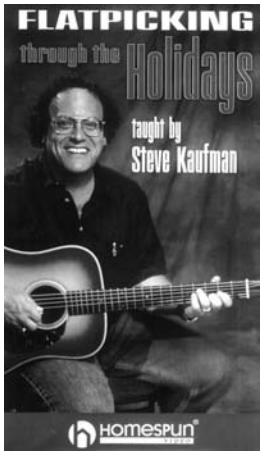

Reviewed by David Moultrup

Steve Kaufman has yet again created a solid, useful addition to his impressive library of flatpicking instructional materials. This video is subtitled "A Year's Worth of Easy Guitar Arrangements." which succinctly sums up the lesson. Steve has chosen songs from various holidays throughout the year and demonstrated songs that are, or could be, related to them. For example, Valentine's Day has "Let Me Call You Sweetheart", St. Patricks Day is celebrated with "When Irish Eyes are Smiling", Hanukkah gets "Who Can Tell", and Christmas is noted with "We Wish You a Merry Christmas". Steve's choice of material is very broad, including various religious and secular holidays.

With each song, Steve's pleasant and relaxed style is evident. The pace of the teaching is nice. He clearly keeps his target audience in mind, and keeps the tunes at a beginner's level. Many of the songs are kept in the key of C, and most of the arrangements rely mainly on the first 3-4 frets of the guitar. His own technique is quite fine, and students have the opportunity to watch his hands, which are both followed with an effective split-screen format.

For the beginning student who is unable to read music, and who lacks a basic familiarity of the guitar, Steve provides a comfortable, nurturing opportunity to add a few fun tunes to the repertoire with *Flatpicking Through the Holidays*.

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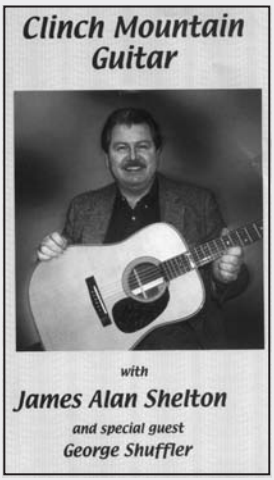
Clinch Mountain Guitar with James Shelton

In this one-hour instructional video James Alan Shelton and special guest George Shuffler demonstrate and teach the guitar techniques that helped change the role of the guitar in bluegrass music. James and George display their crosspicking talents on "Katy Dear," and "Banks of the Ohio," and George demonstrates his solo to "Will You Miss Me." James interviews George regarding his crosspicking technique and then James teaches "Rank Stranger," "Uncloudy Day," "Bury Me Beneath the Willow," "Wildwood Flower," "Road To Coeburn," and "Tom's Creek." A tab book accompanies the video.



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Acoustic Guitar Fundamentals

In this two-hour video from bluegrass guitar veteran Tim Stafford you will learn the fundamental skills that will make you a better guitar player.

Tuning, Timing, Tone, Technique, and Taste are all essential skills that guitar players from beginners to professionals need to address on a regular basis. Tim's masterful presentation of these concepts and the practical, time tested methods he teaches you on this video will not only help you understand, improve and maintain these skills, but will advance your overall guitar skills considerably.

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Orrin's Star's Bluegrass Rhythm Guitar Workshop

Having created the first day-long workshop devoted exclusively to rhythm playing, renowned flatpicker Orrin Star has helped guitarists around the country improve their rhythm skills. This 75-minute video offers an enhanced version of Orrin's live workshop, featuring additional bass runs and songs, a new section on playing with other guitarists, and a guest appearance by Kenny Smith. Starting with the basics and working up from there, Orrin teaches: a full range of strums and bass runs, including how and when to apply them; the key to killer bass runs (rest strokes); the "cool" chord forms; and how to approach faster songs.

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In this two-hour video rhythm guitar master Wyatt Rice teaches you how to greatly expand your rhythm guitar abilities by teaching: crosspicking rhythm; syncopated rhythm; a variety of right hand patterns combined with left hand technique to develop a "groove" rhythm, unique bass runs; passing chords; chord substitutions; and chord inversions. Additionally Wyatt is shown improvisationally accompanying various instruments (banjo, fiddle, guitar, mandolin) and then analyzing what he has done to provide the rhythmic foundation behind each instrument. **(Available Oct 2001)**

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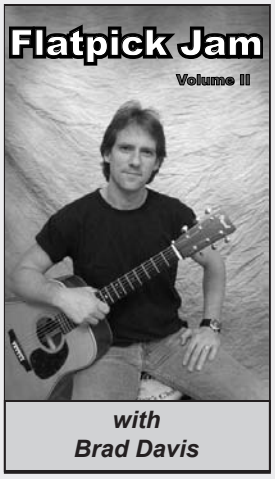
Flatpick Jam (Volumes I & II) with Brad Davis

With Brad Davis' *Flatpick Jam* videos you are never without a jamming partner. Each of these two-hour videos is packed with flatpicking jam session favorites (22 in all). Brad plays each tune at four different tempos (slow, slow/medium, medium/fast, and fast) so that you can work on your tone, timing, note clarity, and fluidity at the slower tempos and then work to develop your speed at the higher tempos. At each tempo Brad takes a solo then plays rhythm so you can take your solo. At the three higher tempos Brad swaps solos and rhythm with you twice. On each tune Brad plays a variety of rhythmic and lead styles. A bass and mandolin chop accompany every song at every tempo, and chord changes are indicated on-screen. The tunes presented are:

Sally Goodin, Turkey In The Straw, Temporance Reel, Fisher's Hornpipe, Soldier's Joy, Whiskey Before Breakfast, Blackberry Blossom, Black Mountain Rag, Salt Creek, Red Haired Boy, Wildwood Flower, Billy In The Lowground, Arkansas Traveler, Old Joe Clark, St. Anne's Reel, Nine Pound Hammer, Bill Cheathum, John Hardy, Angeline The Baker, Rueben, Paddy On The Turnpike, Forked Deer.



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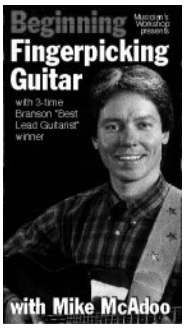
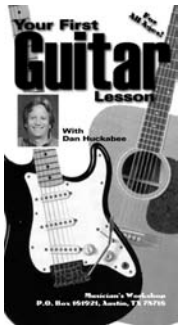


Osmond Family (Donnie & Marie) lead guitarist, Mike McAdoo teaches 10 standards (mostly from the Bluegrass repertoire) for the beginning fingerpicker. This will get you started in the Merle Travis * Chet Atkins style of fingerpicking guitar (Video/Tab) #6937.....$29.95

The only video that truly realizes that a person can only concentrate on one thing at a time. Learn 19 chords, 23 fun familiar songs, how to make your guitar easy to play, how to use small guitars & ukuleles for children, & all the tricks that make learning quick & easy. For all ages (video/booklet) #6806...$29.95

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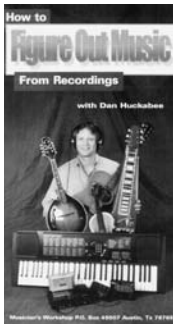

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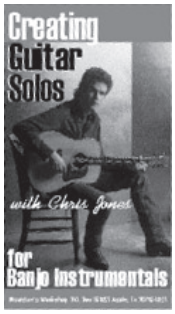

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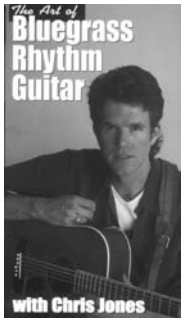

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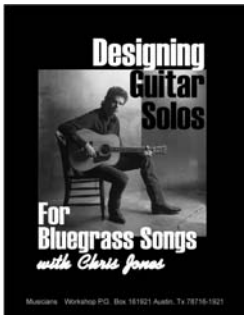

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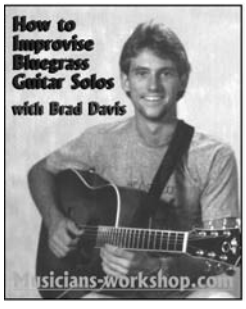

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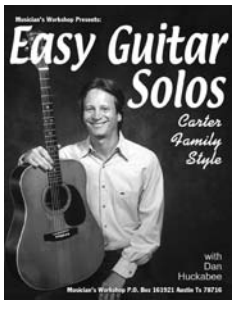

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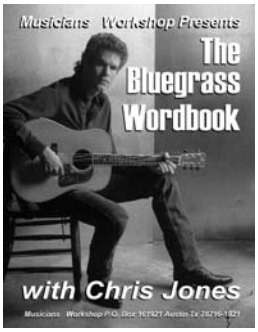

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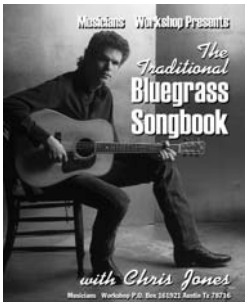

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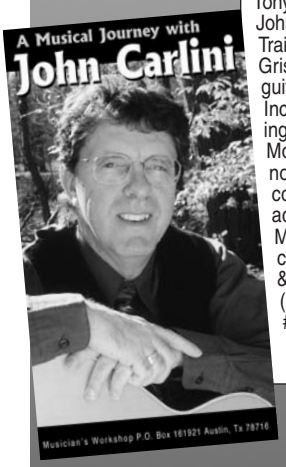

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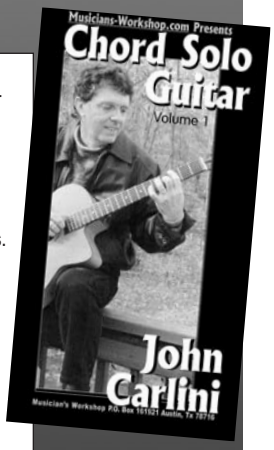

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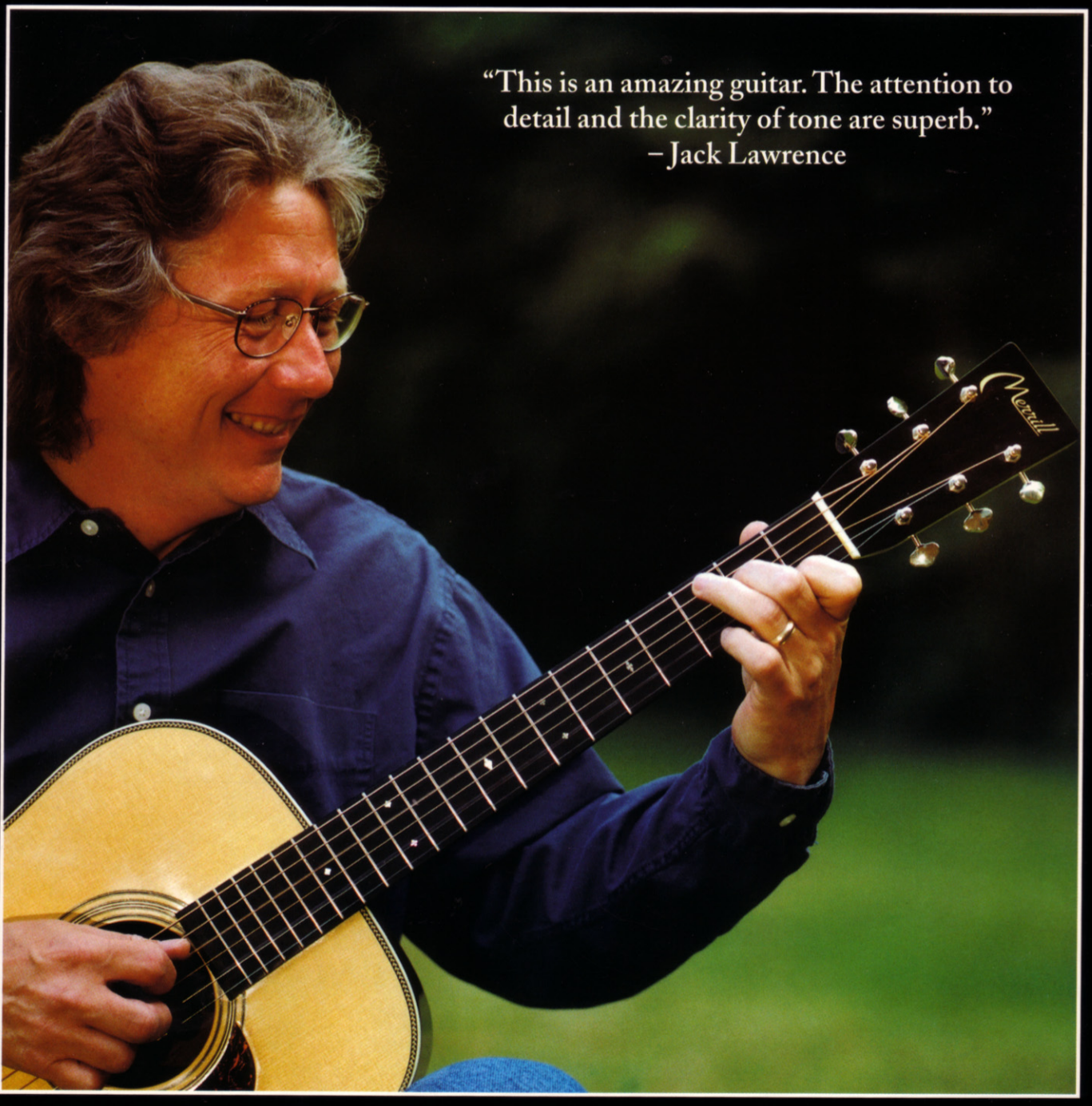

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